

The East Face of Helicon

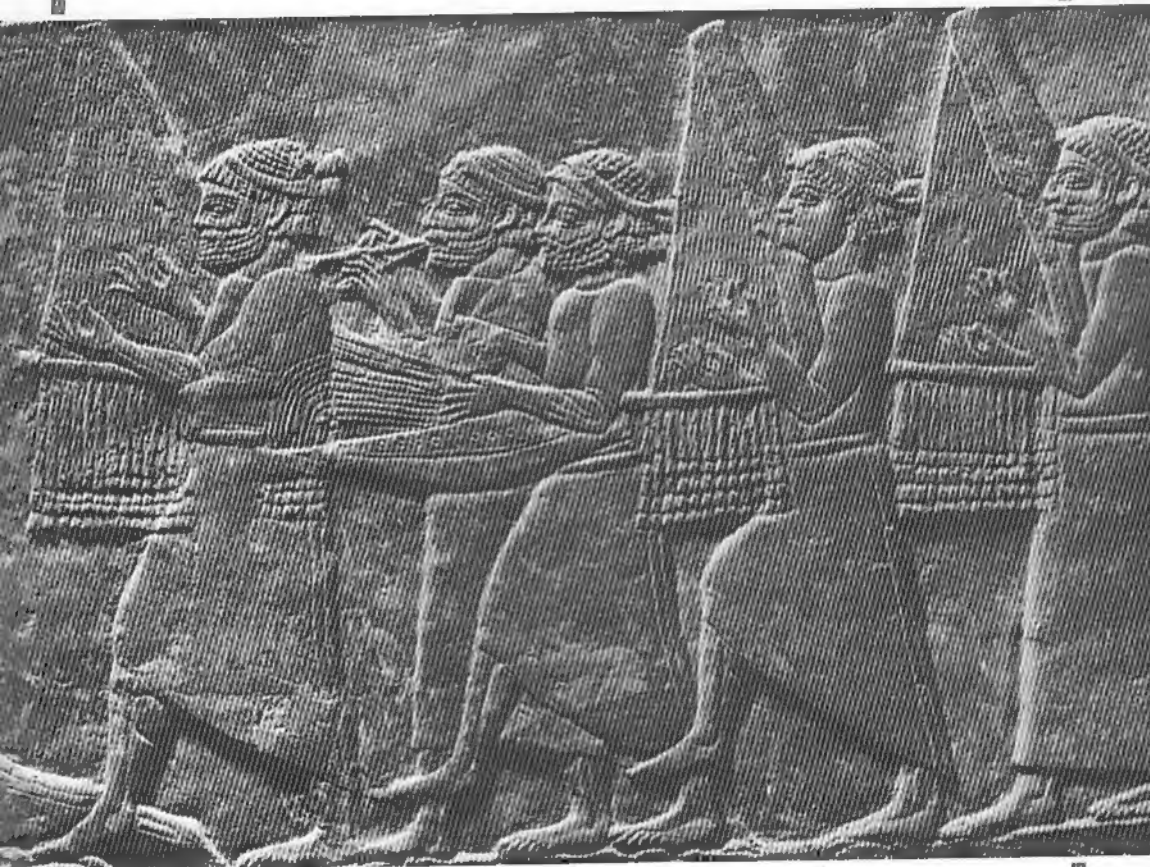
West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth

M. L. WEST

CLARENDON PRESS • OXFORD

THE EAST FACE OF HELICON

*West Asiatic Elements in Greek
Poetry and Myth*



M. L. WEST

CLARENDON



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ALMAE NOVERCAE

COLLEGIO OMNIVM ANIMARVM

PREFACE

For some years I have had it in mind to write a book on the origins and development of the Greek epic tradition down to and including Homer. This will involve the attempt to assess how much the tradition owed to Indo-European inheritance, and by what stages it developed between the early Mycenaean age and the Classical period. An important part of the story will concern the modification of the tradition under the influence of Near Eastern poetry.

I started to investigate this last topic as an initial approach to the task. But before long I found that the material was heaping itself so high, and spilling so far beyond Homer, that it was clearly necessary to write a separate little book dealing with the whole subject of the Near Eastern element in early Greek poetry. Here you have it.

The focus is on literary influences as manifested in Greek poetry and in myths which may be presumed to have been narrated in early poetry, even if we are dependent on later prose sources for some details of them. I cover the Hesiodic and Homeric poems, lyric (in the broadest sense) down to Pindar and Bacchylides, and Aeschylus, who provides a natural stopping-point: the later fifth century ceases to yield material of the relevant kind. I am not concerned with oriental contributions to science and philosophy, nor with the influences exercised by the East on other aspects of Greek culture, though my first chapter includes a brisk survey of these as the background for what follows.

In my subtitle I have used the expression 'West Asiatic' rather than 'Near Eastern'. This is to signal the fact that I have drawn my comparative material almost wholly from Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Syrian, and biblical sources, and deliberately left Egypt more or less out of the picture. I have occasionally cited Egyptian material, when it demanded to be cited, but in general my view is that the influence of Egypt on Greek poetry and myth was vanishingly small in comparison with that of western Asia. This may to some extent reflect my own ignorance. But it may be felt that Egypt has had more than its due from others in recent years.

I have sometimes found it convenient to use the term 'Semitic' with reference not only to linguistic phenomena but to ideas or practices. In so doing I do not mean to imply that the various Semitic peoples shared a common culture, or that the things in question were inherited from a proto-Semitic culture, or that they had their origin in a specifically Semitic mentality. The expression is to be understood in an empirical

sense, as applying to things that are as a matter of fact attested among two or more Semitic peoples in historical times.

This is the longest book I have written (so far), but by no means the most difficult to read. It contains no complicated arguments. The greater part of it consists simply in the selection and juxtaposition of parallels, which will speak for themselves. I am well aware that some of these parallels are more compelling than others. Readers must decide for themselves what weight they attach to each. I should perhaps emphasize that when I quote parallels from oriental texts I am not (in most cases) suggesting that these are the *direct sources* of the Greek text or motif in question. I quote them as evidence that the concept, the form of expression, or whatever, was current in one or more of the West Asiatic literatures and might have come into Greek literature from the East. For this purpose it is not essential (though it is obviously preferable) that the oriental text cited should be of earlier date than the Greek. If Homer can on occasion be illustrated from Deutero-Isaiah, the fact that the latter is the later by a century or so does not nullify the parallel, given that Homeric influence on sixth-century Hebrew writing is out of the question, or at any rate severely implausible.

I can anticipate at least two possible lines of criticism that may be employed against my work. One would be that, in stressing similarities and parallels, I have ignored the great *differences* between Greek and Near Eastern literatures; the other, that I have drawn my comparisons unsystematically from widely different sources, Mesopotamian, Anatolian, biblical, etc., and those of widely differing dates, as if oriental culture were all one.

As to the first, my answer will be that of course Greek literature has its own character, its own traditions and conventions, and the contrasts that might be drawn between it and any of the oriental literatures might far outnumber the common features. If anyone wants to write another book pointing them out, I should have no objection (though I do not promise to read it). But even if it were ten times the size of mine, it would not diminish the significance of the likenesses, because they are too numerous and too striking to be put down to chance. You cannot argue against the fact that it is raining by pointing out that much of the sky is blue.

In reply to the other criticism it may be remarked that a parallel, like love, is where you find it. The ones I have collected do come from various parts of the Near East, and from various periods: some are from sources roughly contemporary with the literature of Archaic Greece, others are from much earlier. The justification for bringing them all together is that, although West Asiatic culture is far from being unitary, it

is characterized by such far-reaching supra-regional interrelationships that one cannot treat the countries in question in isolation. Hurrian and Hittite literature was deeply influenced by the Sumero-Babylonian; the writings of the Old Testament often reveal affinities with Ugaritic, Phoenician, or Aramaic texts from further north. Often the same motif or literary device can be illustrated from two or more of these literatures. It may be a matter of chance that something is attested in one and not in another. It would be absurd to write one book about Greek-Akkadian parallels, another about Greek-Ugaritic ones, and so on. Perhaps the geographical spread of my material will at least protect me from the mildewed charge of 'pan-Babylonism'.

As to the chronological spread, this is a feature especially of the Mesopotamian material, which reaches back into the third millennium BC. What has to be borne in mind here is the extraordinary durability of the cuneiform tradition. The same works continued to be read, copied, and adapted for many centuries, in some cases for well over a thousand years. A text composed in the early second millennium might be thought too far removed in time to be relevant to Homer; yet in some cases where such a text furnishes a parallel, we know that it was still being copied in the seventh century, so that the gap shrinks to nothing. In other cases we can see how motifs were borrowed in later Babylonian poems and so perpetuated. Again it may be chance that something is paralleled in an early text and not a later one.

The passages which I quote for comparison are normally given in translation; I add the original text only where there is some special reason to do so. With the Greek, Hittite, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Hebrew texts I have in nearly all cases made my own translations of the passages in question: not because I wanted the opportunity to bias them in favour of my argument, but on the contrary, in an effort to produce renderings that should be as scrupulous as I could make them. Apart from being at times inaccurate, the available translations (and such do not exist in all cases) were made for different purposes, and they sometimes, it may be for literary reasons, sacrifice nuances of meaning or emphasis that I thought it good to preserve. In chapter 10 I have recycled some of the versions published in my *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford, 1993).

I have printed Greek words sometimes, and Hebrew words generally, in transliterated form, to enable readers not conversant with the relevant scripts to identify certain significant terms and to appreciate linguistic comparisons. Where whole Greek phrases or sentences are quoted, I have naturally reverted to the Greek alphabet, and in the index of words discussed it seemed right to use the Greek and Hebrew alphabetical

orders and therefore alphabets. On the principles of transliteration followed for Hebrew and other oriental languages see the separate note on pp. xxi-xxiv.

In some parts of the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, there is a discrepancy between the Hebrew Bible and English versions in the numbering of verses. Where this occurs, I cite the Hebrew numeration first with the English in brackets, for example 'Ps. 30. 10(9)'.

The comparative study of Greek and Near Eastern literature has not been much cultivated at Oxford in recent times, apart from my own occasional efforts over the last thirty-something years. But it is no rude novelty in these parts. In 1658 Zachary Bogan, a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, followed up his two initial publications (*A View of the Threats and Punishments Recorded in the Scriptures*, dedicated to his 'honoured father', and *Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life and the Vaine Mirth of a Wicked Life*, dedicated to his 'honoured mother') with a substantial volume entitled *Homerus Ἑρραϊζων sive comparatio Homeri cum scriptoribus sacris quoad normam loquendi*. In it he notes a very large number of parallels between Homer (and Hesiod) and the Old Testament. Some of them have to be rejected, but many remain valid. What historical significance he attached to them, if any, he does not explain.

In those days, of course, it was common enough for Latin, Greek, and Hebrew to be studied in parallel. From the late eighteenth century Classical studies became more isolationist. Works such as Bogan's were forgotten, or at any rate left unopened; I do not know whether anyone but myself has read him in the last two hundred years. But today we have very different perspectives. In the second half of the nineteenth century it became possible to read Akkadian cuneiform, and this led in time to the understanding of Sumerian and Hittite texts. The excavation of Ugarit that began in 1929 yielded a further West Asiatic language and literature of the late Bronze Age. With all this material to hand, certain scholars, mainly orientalists, began to find new points of contact with the Classical world, though their comparisons were very variable in persuasive power. The discovery in the thirties and forties of the Hurro-Hittite Kumarbi mythology, with its undeniable anticipations of Hesiod's *Theogony*, finally forced Hellenists to accept the reality of Near Eastern influence on early Greek literature. Since then they have shown themselves increasingly tolerant of oriental comparisons, if not particularly active in investigating the oriental literatures for themselves. The outstanding exception is Walter Burkert, whose work will have opened many people's eyes.

'The beginnings of Greek literature are starting to take on a new aspect.' Those words, written in the year of my birth by Franz Dornseiff, are still applicable. Another writer has gone so far as to proclaim the end of Classical scholarship as a self-sufficient discipline:

The days of an exclusively 'classical' scholarship are over. To write about Greek literature without knowing something of the West Asiatic has become as impossible as studying Roman literature without knowledge of the Greek.¹

That depends, of course, on which area of Greek literature is in question, but I hope to show the truth of the statement as regards the whole field of Archaic and early Classical poetry.

Even from Oxford it is possible to discern the beginnings of a new and welcome trend for classicists and ancient historians to study at least one oriental language. It would perhaps be too absolute to say that this is where the future of our studies lies; but nothing will contribute more to their progress than the bringing of new evidence to bear, and this is a particularly promising direction in which to look for it. It must become a firm part of our agenda for the twenty-first century. But there is much consciousness-raising still to be done. There are still too many classicists who thoughtlessly use 'the ancient world' or 'das Altertum' as a synonym for 'Graeco-Roman antiquity', as if other ancient civilizations did not exist.

On the other hand, there is a need for more orientalists, especially in the Assyriological field. Cuneiform studies have made enormous advances in the present century, but the ratio of manpower to material is such that they remain in a very undeveloped state by comparison with our Graeco-Roman scholarship. All-round commentaries on literary texts, such as we are used to for classical authors, scarcely exist. Nor do word indexes and concordances. In many cases there are no proper critical editions. Such editions as there are must often be hunted down in periodicals or Festschriften which can be found only in a few specialist libraries, and then supplemented from subsequent publications of additional fragments. Numerous texts are available only in cuneiform reproduction, which, given the polyvalence of many cuneiform signs, is considerably more troublesome than having to study a Greek or Latin author from a manuscript facsimile. Others are not available at all.

¹ Dornseiff, 35, 'Die Anfänge der griechischen Literatur beginnen ein anderes Gesicht zu bekommen'; Petriconi, 338 n. 18, 'Die Zeiten einer nur "klassischen" Philologie sind damit vorbei; über die griechische Literatur zu schreiben, ohne etwas von der vorderasiatischen zu wissen, ist ebenso unmöglich geworden, wie etwa ohne Kenntnis der griechischen die römische Literatur zu studieren.'

Thousands of shattered tablets still await reconstruction, identification, and publication. We must hope that the interest and promise of this field of study, difficult as it is, will in time attract larger numbers of students to those centres that have the bibliographical resources to teach the subject, leading in due course to increases of staffing and the production of more trained Assyriologists.

This work is dedicated to All Souls College, which elected me to a Senior Research Fellowship in 1991 and so liberated me from the importunities of the increasingly officious bureaucracy that has taken hold of much of our university system:

κύκλου δ' ἔξεπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο,
ἡμερτοῦ δ' ἐπέβαν στεφάνου ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι.

But for that, I would not have been able to write the book. For a start, I would not have had the time to attend Dr. Stephanie Dalley's classes in Akkadian, which, together with Dr. Jeremy Black's reading group, were my introduction to Semitic philology. I am further indebted to Dr. Dalley, as well as to Professors J. D. Hawkins and H. G. M. Williamson, for reading my manuscript (initially at the invitation of the Press) and providing numerous valuable comments and corrections. Dr. Black has given additional assistance by discussing various matters and by responding to sporadic queries, in particular on Sumerian texts. Another Stephanie—my wife—also helped by drawing my attention to a number of pertinent points which would have escaped me. When I reached an impasse in the production of the final camera-ready copy, Jane Lightfoot came to the rescue by generously putting her printing facilities at my disposal for several days. Finally, I must thank the Oxford University Press for its readiness to accept the book and for the care devoted to its production.

M.L.W.

All Souls College, Oxford
February 1997

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	<i>Archives épistolaires de Mari</i>
AJO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AHW	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , Wiesbaden 1965–81.
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
An. Stud.	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
ANET	J. B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3rd ed., Princeton 1969.
AOAT	<i>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</i>
ARM	<i>Archives royales de Mari</i>
AT	<i>Atrahasis</i>
IASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
Bibl. Or.	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
BSA	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
BWL	W. G. Lambert, <i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> , Oxford 1960.
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , Chicago 1956–.
CAH	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> : vols. i–ii, 3rd ed., Cambridge 1970–5; vol. iii, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1982–91.
CANE	J. M. Sasson (ed.), <i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> , 4 vols., New York 1995.
CEG	P. A. Hansen, <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca</i> i–ii, Berlin & New York 1983–9.
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CPLM	A. Livingstone, <i>Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea</i> (<i>State Archives of Assyria</i> , iii), Helsinki 1989.
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</i> , London 1896–.
CTH	E. Laroche, <i>Catalogues des textes hittites</i> , Paris 1971 (cited by text number).
DK	H. Diels, <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , 5th ed. by W. Kranz, Berlin 1934–5.

- EA Letters from the El Amarna archive (standard numeration: J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, Leipzig 1915; W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, Baltimore & London 1992).
- En. el. *Enūma elī*
- FGrHist F. Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin & Leiden 1923–58.
- Gilg. The Gilgamesh epic
- GRBS *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
- HSCP *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
- IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*
- JANES *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
- JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
- JDAI *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*
- JEA *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
- JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies*
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- JRAS *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
- JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
- KAH *Keilschrifttexte historischen Inhalts*, Leipzig 1911, 1922.
- KAI H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, 2nd ed., Wiesbaden 1966–9.
- KAR *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, Leipzig 1919, 1923.
- KAV *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts*, Leipzig 1920.
- KBo *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*
- KTU M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. Bd. I, Neukirchen 1976; *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (KTU: 2nd, enlarged ed.), Münster 1995.
- KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*
- LKA E. Ebeling, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*, Berlin 1953.
- LKU A. Falkenstein, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk*, Berlin 1931.
- LSS *Leipziger semitistische Studien*
- MARI *Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires*
- MDOG *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*
- MIO *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*

- Mus. Helv. *Museum Helveticum*
- MVAG *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*
- NABU *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires*
- NJb *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Paedagogik* (later: *für das klassische Altertum*)
- OBV *Old Babylonian Version*
- OECT *Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts*
- OLZ *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
- Or. *Orientalia* (N.S. = New Series)
- PhW *Philologische Wochenschrift*
- PMG D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford 1962.
- PMGF M. Davies, *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, i, Oxford 1991.
- PRU *La Palais royal d'Ugarit*, Paris 1955–.
- RA *Revue d'Assyriologie*
- RE Pauly–Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1894–1980.
- RÉG *Revue des études grecques*
- RHA *Revue Hittite et Asianique*
- Rh. Mus. *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*
- RHR *Revue de l'histoire des religions*
- RIMA A. K. Grayson, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods*, Toronto 1987–.
- RIMB G. Frame, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Babylonian Periods*, Toronto 1995–.
- RIME D. Frayne, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods*, Toronto 1990–.
- RIA *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Berlin & Leipzig 1932–.
- Roscher W. H. Roscher (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Leipzig–Berlin 1884–1937.
- SAAB *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
- SBV *Standard Babylonian Version*
- SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
- SIFC *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica*
- SIG W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd ed., Leipzig 1915–24.
- SMEA *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*
- SSI J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, 3 vols., Oxford 1971–82.
- STP O. R. Gurney et al., *The Sultantepe Tablets*, London 1957–.
- TAPA *Transactions of the American Philological Association*

TrGF	B. Snell et al., <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , Göttingen 1971—.
TUAT	<i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments</i> , Gütersloh 1982—.
Tuk.-Nin.	The Tukulti-Ninurta epic
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VAB	<i>Vorderasiatische Bibliothek</i>
VAT	Berlin Museum collections, <i>Vorderasiatische Abteilung</i>
YOS	<i>Yale Oriental Series. Babylonian Texts</i> , i.
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für Altestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTION OF ORIENTAL LANGUAGES

From time to time in this work I shall have occasion to quote words or phrases from various ancient oriental languages, especially Semitic (Akkadian, Ugaritic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic), but also Sumerian, Hittite, and Egyptian. The modest purpose of this note is to give the non-specialist reader an idea of the significance of the special letters and diacritics used in transliterating these languages from their original scripts, and of certain other phenomena to be encountered.

Apart from Egyptian, these languages are recorded in one of two forms of writing system. Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hittite (and occasionally Ugaritic) are written in cuneiform, using a large number of signs which may have logographic, phonetic (syllabic), or determinative value. The logographic values were established in the writing of Sumerian and then taken over in the writing of the other languages, where they might be complemented by phonetic signs to indicate grammatical forms. For example, the Sumerian for 'silver' is written with two signs transcribed as *kù-babbar* (literally 'pure white'). The Akkadian word for silver, *kaspu*, may be written phonetically as *ka-spu* or *ka-as-pu*, or as a 'Sumerogram', *KÙ.BABBAR*. The accusative *kaspu* might be indicated with a phonetic complement, *KÙ.BABBAR-am*. A determinative is an additional sign prefixed or suffixed to a word to indicate a category to which it belongs, for example that it is the name of a divinity, or a man's name, or a country, or a type of stone, or a bird. In transcriptions these are conventionally printed as superscripts, for example ^{URU}*Ši-du-un-nu* '(town) Sidon'. Those for 'god' and for a man's or woman's name are commonly abbreviated and Latinized as *d*, *m*, *f*.

Ugaritic (usually), Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic are written in alphabetic scripts. Their alphabets, however, contained only consonantal signs, and gave little indication of the vowels to be supplied, except that the consonants *w* and *y* often mark the vowels *o/u* and *i* respectively, and in Ugaritic there are three different signs for the consonant aleph (see below) according to whether it is followed by *a*, *i*, or *u*; these are transcribed *ā* *ī* *ū*. In Hebrew and biblical Aramaic, systems of pointing to indicate the vowels were introduced by the Masoretes, scholarly interpreters of the Old Testament text, on the basis of traditional pronunciation. The best known of these systems is that developed at Tiberias in the ninth and tenth centuries AD, and although it may not

accurately represent the vowel palette of the ancient languages, it is customary to follow it in transcriptions.

In Akkadian there is a distinction between long and short vowels, long ones being marked in transcription with a macron (\bar{a} \bar{e} \bar{o} \bar{u}). In some older publications a circumflex was used for this purpose, but the modern convention is to reserve this for those vowels which represent the contraction of two unlike vowels. The acute and grave accents which often appear in the transcription of cuneiform signs (as in $k\acute{u}$ above) have no phonetic significance but serve to differentiate between homophones.

In Hebrew the vowels transcribed as \bar{a} \bar{e} \bar{o} differ from a e o in quality rather than quantity: they are more closed, i.e. nearer to o i u respectively. The circumflex on \bar{e} \bar{i} \bar{o} \bar{u} is conventionally used to indicate the presence in the consonantal text of y (for e or i) or w (for o or u). There is also a series of reduced vowels, \bar{a} \bar{e} \bar{o} and e (schwa); the last is systematically written in the Masoretic text between adjacent consonants within a word, but in many cases it may have had no phonetic reality and can be omitted in transcription. The stress in Hebrew is normally on the last syllable; in those cases where it falls on the penult, I have indicated this with an acute accent.

Proto-Semitic was poor in vowels but rich in consonants, having an altogether wider range of dentals, palatals, laryngeals, and sibilants than English does. Most of them were preserved as separate sounds in Ugaritic (and modern Arabic), rather fewer in the West Semitic languages of the first millennium, fewer again in Akkadian. But in transliterating all these languages our alphabet has to be supplemented with diacritics and special characters.

The sign \aleph (aleph) represents a glottal stop, as at the beginning of an emphatic 'Ouch!' or at the end of a Cockney 'but'. It can occur doubled in Akkadian. For Ugaritic \aleph \aleph see above.

The sign \textcircled{a} (ayin) represents a constriction deep in the throat, the voiced equivalent of h . It does not occur in Akkadian.

d (Ugaritic and early Aramaic; some scholars write \check{z}) is a voiced interdental, like English th in 'father'.

g (Ugaritic only) is a voiced velar fricative, the voiced equivalent of h .

\tilde{g} (Sumerian only) is a nasal velar, like ng in 'sing'.

Three kinds of h are distinguished in Ugaritic: h , \check{h} , \textcircled{h} . The first may be taken as like our h , and the second as like ch in 'loch', while the third is a harsh aspirate located deep in the throat. Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic have only h and \check{h} . Akkadian has only \check{h} ; as this does not need to be distinguished from the others, the simple h is often used in

transliterations from Akkadian (and the other languages written in syllabic cuneiform). I have followed this practice, but it should be borne in mind that h here represents \check{h} .

q is not to be pronounced as qu -; it is like k , but further back in the throat.

From simple s we have to distinguish \check{s} , \textcircled{s} , and $\textcircled{\textcircled{s}}$. The so-called emphatic sibilant, \textcircled{s} , is pronounced with the root of the tongue pressed against the palate; ts is a sufficient approximation. \check{s} is like English sh , \textcircled{s} (Hebrew, early Aramaic, Old Akkadian) is intermediate between s and \check{s} . In Hittite the cuneiform signs conventionally transcribed with \check{s} are used for a phoneme that other evidence indicates was pronounced s . I have accordingly used s , not \check{s} , in Hittite words and names. Note that the combination sh in Hittite transcriptions, for example in the word *shamihhi*, represents $s + h$, not an English sh .

t also has an 'emphatic' counterpart, written \textcircled{t} and pronounced with the root of the tongue pressed up. In addition, Ugaritic and early Aramaic have the interdental \textcircled{t} , pronounced like English th in 'thin'.

z in the Semitic languages is as in English, but in Hittite it is to be pronounced ts . Ugaritic has also \textcircled{z} , which is the 'emphatic' equivalent of h , articulated with raised tongue.

In Hebrew, sometime prior to the activity of the Masoretes, the consonants b g d k p t suffered spirantization in all postvocalic positions (except where doubled), sounding as v g d h f t respectively. As this change may not have taken place until after the composition of the biblical texts to be quoted, and as its incidence is in any case entirely predictable, it is unnecessary to take account of it in transcription, and I have not done so.

Egyptian hieroglyphs, like cuneiform signs, are a mixture of ideograms and phonetic symbols, but, as in the Semitic alphabetic systems, the phonetic representation is defective in that vowels are not indicated, or are at best hinted at. Of the characters conventionally used in transliteration, the five following may be taken as having the same values as above: \textcircled{h} \check{h} q \check{s} .

The sign \textcircled{h} had or came to have the value of \aleph aleph, but at an earlier stage it may have represented a lateral apical, something between r and l ; it can correspond to r in Middle Kingdom renderings of Semitic names.

\textcircled{h} is not used in the same way in Egyptian as in Ugaritic. At the beginning of a word it represents aleph, but in other positions (consonantal) y .

Besides h , \check{h} , and \textcircled{h} , Egyptian also has $\textcircled{\textcircled{h}}$. This appears to have been a softer version of \check{h} , similar to ch in German 'ich'.

Egyptian does not (in the periods that concern us) have the sound [l], or at any rate no unequivocal way of representing it; *r* does duty for both *r* and *l* in foreign names. (See also above on *ʕ*.)

Egyptian *t* and *d* are not as in Ugaritic but palatalized forms of *t* and *d*, that is *tʰ*, *dʰ*, later merging with *t* and *d*. In renderings of foreign names *d* may represent Semitic *ṣ*, and *t* may represent Hittite *z*.

It is difficult to devise a consistently satisfactory policy for the spelling of oriental proper names in English text. Some names are familiar in historically incorrect forms, and it would be pedantic to write Šarrukīn, Aššur-bāni-apli, or Nabû-kudurri-ušur rather than Sargon, Assurbanipal, Nebuchadnezzar. In other cases, where there is no conventional rendering, it seems advisable to use some of the special letters such as *h*, *t*, *ʕ*, *s*, *š*, so as not to falsify the name unduly, and to preserve the distinction between *k* and *q*. There is less need to indicate length, reduction, or contraction of vowels, and it seems acceptable to write such names as Ishtar, Shamash, Gilgamesh with *sh* rather than *š*. I hope that this versatile approach to the problem will not prove distracting or irritating to my readers.

NOTE ON CHRONOLOGIES

This book makes reference to the literatures and history of several ancient civilizations, extending over a span of some two thousand years. For purposes of orientation I have often attached dates, with a greater or lesser show of precision, to the names of persons, eras, texts, etc. The reader should be advised, however, that the chronology of the Near East and the Aegean area, especially before the first millennium BC, remains somewhat unsettled, the subject of fervid and anxious controversy. The questions are highly complex and technical, and I cannot unroll them in detail.¹ Nor need I, since nothing in my argument depends on precision dating. I have taken pains to choose a system that is self consistent and in the present state of the evidence, so far as I can see, at least as well-founded as any other. For the appeasement of specialists I will summarily state its coordinates.

Mesopotamia

It seems no longer advisable to cling to the view that the Venus tablets of Ammiqaduqa provide data reliable enough to impose a choice between three or four rigid chronologies. I adopt a medium-low chronology, placing Hammurabi's reign in the mid eighteenth century and the end of the Babylonian dynasty c.1575. This gives, for the major figures of the Akkadian and Ur III dynasties, dates of around 2270–2220 for Sargon, 2195–2160 for Naram-Sin, and 2075–2025 for Shulgi.²

Egypt

There seems to be most support at present for those calculations which yield the dates 1879 for the accession of Sesostri III, 1479 for that of Thutmosis III, and 1279 for that of Ramesses II. This is the framework that I have assumed.

¹ Those interested will find abundant material in the following major publications of the last few years: P. Åström (ed.), *High, Middle, or Low? Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th–22nd August 1987*, 3 vols., Göteborg 1987–9; P. M. Warren and V. Hankey, *Aegean Bronze Age Chronology*, Bristol 1989; M. Bietak (ed.), *High, Middle or Low? Acts of the Second International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology* (Nichols Haendorf, Langenlois, 12–15 August 1990), = vol. 3 of the periodical *Ägypten und Levante*, 1992; S. W. Manning, *The Absolute Chronology of the Aegean Early Bronze Age. Archaeology, Radiocarbon and History*, Sheffield 1995.

² This assumes the shortening of the gap between the two dynasties argued by W. W. Hallo, *RIA* III 713 f.

The Aegean

For the Late Bronze Age I adopt a slightly modified version of the system of Warren and Hankey (1989, as in n. 1), but with some stretching at the top end, placing the transition between LH I and IIA around 1520 and the beginning of LH I perhaps sometime in the mid seventeenth century. Some further stretching will be called for if 1628, or a similarly high date, becomes established for the eruption of Thera (which occurred at a mature stage of LM IA, but before its final phase).

For Early Helladic, the Warren-Hankey chronology seems on the high side. The available radiocarbon dates—though they hardly do more than give a scattershot indication of which part of which millennium we should be thinking of—suggest that EH I began sometime in the last quarter of the fourth millennium, EH II well before the middle of the third, and EH III around the 24th or 23rd century. The Middle Helladic period may be conceived as running from the twentieth century to the mid or late seventeenth.

1

Aegean and Orient

Culture, like all forms of gas, tends to spread out from where it is densest into adjacent areas where it is less dense. For some six thousand years, from the seventh millennium BC to the first, a steady succession of arts, crafts, and comforts found their way from south-western Asia, the cradle of the Neolithic revolution, to south-eastern Europe and to that gnarled outpost of Europe that we call Greece: the cultivation of cereals, of flax, of the olive and the vine; pottery, first hand-made and later wheel-made; the working of copper, then bronze, then iron; the protection of property by means of stamped or rolled seals; the art of writing on clay tablets, waxed wooden boards, papyrus, and skins; the walling of towns, the music of harp, lyre, and double oboe—these are only some of the more important items that spring to mind.

Most of those millennia lie outside the purview of the present work, which is concerned with the contribution of the Near East—more specifically the Semitic area and Anatolia—to Greek poetry and myth as we know them in the period 750–450 BC. Of course we cannot restrict our attention to those three centuries, since the literature of that time may well contain eastern elements that reflect earlier contacts. We must look back at least to the Mycenaean age. But we need not look back before the date when the Greek language, or rather, that Indo-European dialect which in due course developed into historical Greek, became established in Greece. As to when that date was, the majority view for the last twenty or thirty years has been that the arrival of the proto-Greek-speakers is signalled archaeologically by two waves of destruction which took place at various sites in central and southern Greece at the beginning and end of the Early Helladic III period. These waves seem now to be flattening out under critical scrutiny.¹ But there remains some evidence, even if it is less clear-cut than was supposed, for the arrival of new population elements in the latter part of the third millennium, and this still seems the most plausible time for the coming of proto-Greek and those who spoke it.²

¹ Jeannette Forsén, *The Twilight of the Early Helladics*, Jönsered 1992.

² The radical thesis of Lord Renfrew, who identifies the spread of agriculture with that of the Indo-Europeans, and thus assumes the Greek language to be the product of indigenous development in Greece starting about 6500 BC (Colin Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language*, London 1987), ignores the evidence of dialect groupings within Indo-European and the chronological parameters set by historical data, and it has found few if any adherents. See the trenchant criticisms by J. P.

These people may have burned villages, but they did not create a desert. The existing population did not vanish. The parvenus found themselves in an established 'Aegean' culture, much of which they assimilated as they settled down. The historical 'Greeks' were to evolve from the mixture of the newcomers with the older tribes, some of whom may have continued to speak their own language for centuries.³ At any rate they contributed many words to the Greek vocabulary, especially for local flora and fauna and for items of material culture. Many of the established place-names were taken over. The same must have been true to some extent of gods, cults, and myths.

The eastern Mediterranean and the Near East: the main lines of communication

Communications between Greece and the Near East, and between the different countries of the Near East, tended to flow along certain definite routes, which were determined by geographical and practical factors. Sea traffic was conditioned by the general preference for keeping as much as possible in sight of land and putting in to land for the night; overland traffic had restrictions set upon it by deserts and mountains.

From Babylonia, for example, the route to the west led not out across the desert but up the Euphrates to Emar (Meskene) in north Syria, where the river is a mere 115 miles from the Mediterranean coast, and then overland to Aleppo and southwards into Canaan. An alternative route left the Euphrates at a lower point and made for Damascus by way of the fertile oasis at Palmyra. From there the ancient 'King's Highway' ran down east of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah, while other roads further west led to Megiddo, Jerusalem, the cities of the Philistines, the Negev, and eventually the Nile delta.

Malory. *In Search of the Indo-Europeans*, London 1989, 177-81, 273-6. A more serious alternative to the orthodox view is the theory which holds that an army of chariot-borne invaders appeared in Greece at the close of the Middle Helladic period (c. 1600) and identifies these as the first Greek-speakers. This has had several distinguished supporters, and it has been powerfully advocated by Robert Drews (*The Coming of the Greeks*, Princeton 1988). But archaeologists insist on the essential continuity between Middle and Late Helladic culture. Any chariot-riding invaders from abroad would almost certainly have come from Crete or the East Mediterranean, whereas the proto-Greeks, on any plausible model of the diffusion of the Greek-Phrygian-Armenian-Iranian-Indian language group, must have come from the direction of Thrace. Cf. Bernal, II, 398-402. Further, history shows that while a band of invading foreigners may establish themselves as a ruling élite, they have little chance of displacing their subjects' language, on the contrary, they are likely to lose their own within a generation or so.

³ The Greeks retained memories or legends of 'Pelagians' in various parts of the country, and held that some of them were still to be found in Chalcidice and south of the Propontis (Hdt. I 57, Thuc. 4, 109).

From the plain of Antioch in north Syria there was a route through the Amanus and Taurus mountains to the central Anatolian plateau with its rich mineral deposits. Assyrian traders were active in this direction about the beginning of the second millennium and established more than two dozen trading colonies in Anatolia. When the Hittite kingdom grew up, starting in the seventeenth century, it was from the first exposed to Assyrian literacy and cultural influence. Hatti's connections were above all with the south and the east, with Cilicia and Syria, with Assyria and with the Hurrians of the Armenian highlands. Such contacts as it had with the Aegean were probably by way of Cilicia rather than by the long overland route to the west coast.

From Egypt there were caravan routes leading across the Sinai desert. However, they were exposed to the depredations of roving beduin, and Egypt's easiest line of communication with western Asia was by sea, past the relatively harbourless littoral of Palestine to the Phoenician ports of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos. Egyptian influence on Phoenician art and culture was strong at various periods, at Byblos especially. In the other direction it was possible to sail along the Libyan coast and then strike out across open sea to Crete. But probably it was more often Cretan sailors who made this journey, assisted on the outward run by the prevailing current. Certainly Egypt and Crete were in contact from early in the third millennium. From Egypt to Greece, on the other hand, the way was more extended and less direct, with either Crete or the Levant as intervening stages,⁴ and significant contacts took place only in certain limited periods, in particular between about 1440 and 1340 and again after 660.⁵

The Levantine shores from Tyre up to Ugarit were a natural home to seagoing peoples. Ships were already plying up and down this coast before 6000 BC. In the second and first millennia there was extensive traffic from it to further destinations. One could sail south to Egypt, or west to Cyprus and Rhodes. From there one could either head in through the Cyclades to Euboea and Attica or the northern Aegean, or out via Carpathos to Crete; from there again one could go on to Cythera, the western Peloponnese, the Ionian Sea, Italy, and beyond.

The Greeks' normal route to the East was the same in reverse. They had contacts with the inland kingdoms of western Anatolia, with the

⁴ Winds and currents generally favour anticlockwise progress, from Crete to Egypt, from Egypt to the Levant, and from the Levant to the Aegean. See the maps in B. J. Kemp and R. S. Merrillies, *Minoan Pottery in Second Millennium Egypt*, Mainz 1980, 270, and G. Kopecke, *Handel* (*Archaeologia Homerica*, M), Göttingen 1990, 70 f. Cf. H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments*, London 1950, 59 f.; Cline, 91, who notes that travel in the opposite direction is also practicable.

⁵ There is some scattered evidence for continuing (or renewed) contacts in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries; see Cline, 36 f.

Phrygians in the eighth century and subsequently with the Lydians, but Gordion and Sardis did not have good eastward communications until the Royal Road was opened up in the seventh century.⁶ The Greek traveller would not normally think of setting out on that long and arduous overland journey. He would make his way by sea towards Cyprus and Syria.

Syria is the grand junction. This is where all the roads met, where Greek, Hittite, Hurrian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian elements all came together. It was indeed a kind of cultural bottleneck, being the unavoidable land bridge between Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia, and at the same time the natural terminus of sea routes from the west. Here the Egyptians fought the Hittites, here Assyrian armies regularly passed through; here Babylonian epics and other literature were copied and read. At Ugarit, the great Bronze Age city on the coast opposite Cyprus, the discovery of tablets in several languages (below, p. 84) gives an indication of the cosmopolitan nature of this region. They do not include any in Linear B, and no Greek names have so far been identified in Ugaritic documents; but they do attest trade with Crete, and the abundance of Mycenaean pottery and other artefacts confirms that there were live connections in every direction.

EAST-WEST COMMERCE: THE MAIN PHASES

It has increasingly come to be realized that the Neolithic age was already characterized by the existence of far-reaching trade networks, by which coveted minerals and other commodities were conveyed across hundreds or thousands of miles by sea or over land.⁷ As early as the seventh millennium obsidian from Melos was being taken all over the Aegean, as far as Thessaly and Crete. By the mid third millennium silver and copper from Spain were reaching Mesopotamia, as were lapis lazuli from Afghanistan and carnelian beads from the Indus valley.⁸ By the end of the third millennium the Egyptians were using silver that has been

⁶ Cf. J. M. Cook in *CAH* II(2), 799 f.; Burkert (1992), 14. Even then it did not become a Greek highway. Cleomenes was horrified when he heard about it (*Idt.* 5. 50). It is significant that the Lydians and Phrygians got the Phoenician alphabet from the Greeks, not vice versa. Nevertheless, one cannot altogether discount the significance of overland connections across Anatolia; see J. M. Birmingham, *An. Stud.* 11, 1961, 185-95.

⁷ Heick, 1-4; Albright, 51 f. (= repr. 58 f.); Crowley, 254 f.

⁸ J. E. Dayton in J. G. P. Best and N. M. W. de Vries (edd.), *Interaction and Acculturation in the Mediterranean (Proceedings of the Second Congress of Mediterranean Pre- and Protohistory, Amsterdam, 19-23 November 1980)*, ii, Amsterdam 1982, 159, 163; J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, London & New York 1992, 206-17.

diagnosed as coming from the Laurion mines of Attica.⁹ In view of such connections it is not surprising that the Aegean world into which the first Greek-speakers penetrated in the second half of the third millennium had already absorbed many cultural elements of West Asiatic origin.

However, there is little to suggest that Greece was receiving any active stimulation from the civilizations of the East at that time, or that it did so during the Middle Helladic period. Crete was in contact with Egypt and the Levant, and the Cyclades with Crete; but Crete was still wholly non-Greek, and the mainland was not effectively in touch with it. In these circumstances we must take care not to be misled by loose talk of oriental contacts with 'the Aegean'. The Aegean at this period sundered Crete from the mainland rather than connecting them.

With the transition from Middle to Late Helladic in the latter part of the seventeenth century things changed. In the Argolid a vigorous warrior society arose. It may have had eastern connections of some kind; at any rate it was soon accumulating wealth and weaponry along eastern seaways. The treasures in the Shaft Graves of Circle A at Mycenae included Mesopotamian glass beads, elephant tusks from Syria, an Egyptian jug and vases, two rhyta (drinking-vessels) made from Nubian ostrich eggs, of Egyptian or Syro-Palestinian manufacture, and a gold pin and silver rhyton from Anatolia; there was amber from northern Europe, and lapis lazuli originally quarried in Afghanistan. Not only did objects of oriental manufacture begin to appear on Greek soil in increasing numbers: a profusion of oriental artistic motifs were taken over into Aegean art, and one or two perhaps travelled in the opposite direction. The influence of Minoan Crete on the mainland was now conspicuous. It may be that Crete 'was the main channel for Near Eastern materials and innovations (such as the war-chariot) at this period'.¹⁰

In the second half of the fifteenth century the Mycenaeans began to be much more active overseas, not just as traders but as conquerors and colonizers. They took over Cnossos and became a presence in Crete; they established settlements in Cos, Rhodes, and Miletus; they traded extensively with the Levant by way of Cyprus. The Egyptians, whose dim northern horizon had been Crete, now became aware of a more distant land called *Tnyw* (perhaps to be read Tanayu), which it is tempting to associate with 'Danaoi'. It is first mentioned in the 42nd year of Tuthmosis III (c.1438), when some gifts from its king are

⁹ Z. A. Stos-Gale in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (edd.), *The Minoan Thalassocracy: Myth and Reality (Proceedings of the Third International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 31 May-5 June 1982)*, Athens 1984, 87.

¹⁰ Dickinson, 248.

recorded; they include a silver vessel of Cretan workmanship.¹¹ From the reign of Amenophis III (c. 1390–52) we have a statue-base with a list of places in Kftw (Crete) and Tnyw, among which can be recognized, with varying degrees of probability, Amnisos (³nniš), Phaestus (byš[.]y), Cydonia (ktwny), Mycene (mwkinw), Thebes (diqys), Messene (midni), Nauplia (nwpiriy), Cythera (ktir), Cnossos (knywš), Lyctos (rikti), and, as it seems, Ilios (wiriy).¹² At four of these places (Phaestus, Cydonia, Mycene, Cnossos) objects have been found inscribed with the cartouche of Amenophis or of his queen Tiy. It has recently been suggested that they were all brought by an Egyptian embassy which visited the Aegean cities listed on the statue-base at Amenophis' behest, and that a fresco at Mycene showing a red-skinned and a black-skinned man between two female figures might commemorate the event.¹³ This may be too fanciful, but there is much other evidence for Mycenaean–Egyptian contacts, especially in the time of Amenophis and his successor Akhenaten, that is, between about 1390 and 1336.¹⁴ A papyrus fragment from Amarna is illustrated with a battle scene in which a band of Mycenaean warriors, presumably mercenaries, in Egyptian linen kilts but with boar's-tusk helmets and ox-hide shields, run to assist a fallen Egyptian.¹⁵

Meanwhile, from the fifteenth century on, Mycenaean pottery was arriving in large quantities in Cyprus, Syria, and Palestine. It turns up at nearly every excavated coastal site, and as far inland as Carchemish, Damascus, and Amman, always accompanied by Cypriot pottery. It was not necessarily Greeks who carried it so far, but it is clear that there was an active and extensive trade network linking mainland Greece and the Levant, with Cyprus at the hub. The traffic of course went in both directions. A tax document from Ugarit, dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, mentions the return from Crete of a merchant Sinaranu who regularly went there.¹⁶ 'Canaanite' container jars—actually made in various centres in the Near East—turn up by the score all round the Aegean.¹⁷

¹¹ Cline, 110.

¹² E. Edel, *Die Ortsnamenlisten aus dem Totentempel Amenophis III*, Bonn 1966, esp. 37–48; Helck, 29–32; Cline, 38 f., 112, 115. If the identification of Ilios is correct, it does not mean that Troy was under Greek control, only that the Egyptians thought of this important Aegean city as belonging in the north with Crete and 'Tanayu'.

¹³ Cline, 39, 41 f.; objections by J. M. Weinstein, *BASOR* 297, 1995, 90 f.

¹⁴ Helck, 84–92, 95, 97 f.; Cline, 31–47.

¹⁵ L. Schofield and R. B. Parkinson, *BSA* 89, 1994, 157–70; Cline, 42, 108.

¹⁶ It comes from an archive concerning this man: *PRU* iii, 101–8; M. Heltzer, *Minos* 23, 1988, 7–13; Cline, 49, 120.

¹⁷ Cline, 95–7.

Two wrecked ships discovered on the sea bed off the coast of Lycia, one dating from the second half of the fourteenth, the other from the late thirteenth century, have provided snapshots of the commerce in those waters in the Mycenaean period. The first, located off Ulu Burun near Kap, was carrying a large cargo of metal ingots (355 copper and some tin) together with blue glass ingots, unworked elephant and hippopotamus ivory, and African blackwood; gold and silver jewellery of Canaanite types; a Mycenaean and two Mesopotamian seals; a gold ring with Egyptian hieroglyphs, a gold scarab of Nefertiti, and other small Egyptian inscribed objects; beads of glass, faience, and amber; bronze tools and weapons, including swords of Aegean, Near Eastern, and probably Italian types; haematite weights; Canaanite, Cypriot, and some Mycenaean pottery; figs, myrrh or frankincense, orpiment, and probably olive oil and wine; some bone astragaloi, a bronze krotalon, and a hinged wooden writing-tablet. This inventory indicates that the ship had sailed from Syria (probably Ugarit) by way of Cyprus and was heading for the Aegean.¹⁸ The other vessel, a smaller one, was found off Cape Helikonya (Yardımcı Burun), and it too would seem to have been travelling from east to west. The main cargo again consisted of copper and tin ingots, but it seems that the boat was carrying not only raw materials but a travelling smith and his working equipment. There were bronze tools and weapons, household utensils, agricultural implements, whetstones, weights, stone mace-heads, an anvil, scarabs, pieces of crystal, and an antique north Syrian cylinder seal. Some of the tools bore Cyprio-Minoan markings.¹⁹

This quarter-millennium of thriving international exchange dissolved into a period of violence and insecurity that spanned the end of the thirteenth and the first decades of the twelfth century and changed the political map of the eastern Mediterranean. In Greece, Anatolia, Cyprus, and coastal Syria and Palestine cities and palaces were looted and destroyed, in some cases not to rise again. From 1208 to 1176 Egypt was repeatedly attacked by her western and northern neighbours, both of them assisted by sizeable mixed contingents of foreign mercenaries. In the 1180s the Hittite empire collapsed with the destruction of its capital.

¹⁸ G. F. Bass, *AJA* 90, 1986, 269–96, and *National Geographic* 172(6), Dec. 1987, 692–733; C. Pulak, *AJA* 92, 1988, 1–37; G. F. Bass, C. Pulak, D. Collon, and J. Weinstein, *AJA* 93, 1990, 1–29; G. F. Bass, *Biblical Archaeologist* 53(1), March 1990, 4–10; Cline, 100–4. Pulak (1988, 37) finds indications that the crew may have been Greek.

¹⁹ G. F. Bass, *AJA* 65, 1961, 267–86, and *Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc.* 57(8), 1967, and in N. H. Gale (ed.), *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean*, Jonsöed 1991, 69–82; Cline, 101–5. For comprehensive catalogues and statistical analyses of published finds of objects of oriental provenance in Bronze Age Crete and Greece see C. Lambrou-Phillipson, *Hellenorientalia. The Near Eastern Presence in the Bronze Age Aegean, ca. 3000–1100 B.C.*, Göteborg 1990; Cline (1994).

The sea was beset by pirates and marauders. Everywhere people were on the move, abandoning homes in open country that were too exposed to attack, seeking security in walled cities or mountain redoubts. There was much eastward movement across the Aegean and towards the Levant in the ensuing generations. Some Greek groups settled in Cyprus and Cilicia, and some Cretans in Palestine.²⁰

These upheavals destroyed the momentum of east-west trade. Oriental goods continued to reach Greece in the twelfth century, but in lesser quantity and concentrated in different areas, in Achaea, Attica, the Cyclades, and Rhodes instead of the Argolid and Thebes.²¹ There is evidence of continuing trade in metals between Cyprus and Sardinia,²² and this can hardly have bypassed the Aegean. Certainly in the first half of the eleventh century central mainland Greece was in touch with Cyprus, and indeed there appears to have been another wave of Greek immigration to Cyprus at this time. After that, however, two or three generations pass with little sign of active communication. There cannot ever have been a complete loss of contact: one cannot seriously imagine a decade passing without some ship finding its way from a Greek to a Phoenician port or vice versa.

Well before 900 regular contact was resumed, at least between Euboea and the eastern Mediterranean. Euboean pottery began to arrive in Cyprus, Ras el-Bassit (Syria), and Tyre,²³ and oriental artefacts—Assyrian, Canaanite, Egyptian, and Cypriot—began to reach Euboea. Phoenician, especially Tyrian mariners no doubt played a large part in this trade, perhaps the leading part. They were, after all, sailing all round the Mediterranean ahead of the Greeks. Some of their foundations in the West, such as Cadiz and Utica, are dated by Classical authors to the late twelfth century, though there is no archaeological confirmation of such an early date. The Old Testament (1 Ki. 10. 22) speaks of triennial voyages to Tarshish (usually identified as Tartessus) in the time of Solomon and Hiram (c.970–940). A hoard of Phoenician pottery dating from the late ninth or early eighth century has recently been discovered in Portugal, some thirty miles up the Tagus.²⁴ Two Phoenician stelai

²⁰ On the events of this period and proposed explanations of them, see esp. R. Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age*, Princeton 1993.

²¹ See Cline, 11 f.

²² D. Ridgway in Tsitsikhladze–De Angelis, 40.

²³ See J. N. Coldstream, *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus*, 1988(2), 35–43; P. Courbin, *Hesperia* 62, 1993, 95–113. Proto-geometric sherds, probably Euboean, have been reported even from the shore of the Sea of Galilee, in what is said to be an eleventh-century context, though that is too early for the pottery, which would be of the later tenth century: J. C. Waldbaum, *BASOR* 293 1994, 57.

²⁴ A. M. Arruda in *Interactions in the Iron Age* (Colloquium Proceedings, forthcoming in *Hamburger Beiträge zur Archäologie*).

from Nora in Sardinia are dated to the tenth and ninth centuries.²⁵ Timaeus put the foundation of Carthage in 814; archaeology confirms that it goes back at any rate to sometime in the eighth century. As for the Aegean area, the Greeks had many traditions of early Phoenician occupation on the islands,²⁶ and there are place-names which may be Hittite, such as Salamis, Salmone, Karnos, Karthaia, Stageira, Abdera, Melite (the old name of Samothrace), Killa. Modern archaeologists are nearly all agreed in postulating residence by Phoenician craftsmen in several parts of Greece from the ninth century on; we shall return to this in chapter 12. In the *Odyssey* it is taken for granted that the Phoenicians had always been the great merchant sailors of the Mediterranean, who regularly called at Crete, Egypt, Libya, Pylos, Elis, bringing silver bowls, jewellery, and the like, and trading in slaves. One passage in particular presents a vivid vignette of a Phoenician door-to-door salesman who brings a gold and electrum necklace, which the women of the house pass round and admire and make offers for.²⁷

The Euboeans, for their part, appear to have followed in the Phoenicians' tracks to the West, as well as visiting them in the East. Euboean pottery, some of it perhaps as early as the ninth century, has been found together with Phoenician at more than one site in Sardinia. By the mid eighth century Euboeans and Phoenicians were living in apparently friendly contact at Pithecusa (Ischia).²⁸ On the north Syrian coast the Euboeans had by then apparently established a presence at several trading stations. The volume of commerce between Greece and the Levant was growing steadily. From a little before the middle of the eighth century a marked acceleration is observed. In the mid seventh, the Greeks resumed direct contact with Egypt.

²⁵ W. Röllig in U. Gehrig and H. G. Niemeyer (edd.), *Die Phönizier im Zeitalter Homers*, Mainz 1990, 92. J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, 2nd ed., Jerusalem 1987, 40 f., puts the date one even earlier, in the first half of the eleventh century. W. D. Whitt, on the other hand, assigns them both to the ninth century (*CANE* iv, 2387 f.).

²⁶ *Ibid.* 1. 105. 3 (Cythera), 4. 147. 4 (Thera), 6. 47 (Thasos), Thuc. 1. 8. 1 (Carians and Phoenicians used to occupy most of the islands), etc.; Helck, 159–61; Brauhn, 6–7.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 15. 459 ff. On Phoenicians in the West see D. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, London 1962, 67; Albright, 190 f. (repr. 218–20); S. Moscati, *The World of the Phoenicians*, London 1968, 94–100; Helck, 158–65; J. D. Muhly, *Berytus* 19, 1970, 44–9; F. Barreca et al., *L'espansione fenicia nel Mediterraneo*, Rome 1971; G. Bunnens, *L'expansion phénicienne en Méditerranée*, Brussels & Rome 1979; H. G. Niemeyer (ed.), *Phönizier im Westen. Die Beiträge des Internationalen Symposiums über "Die phönizische Expansion im westlichen Mittelmeerraum"* in Köln vom 24. bis 17. April 1979 (Madrider Beiträge, 8), Mainz 1982; G. Bunnens et al. in *Les Phéniciens et le monde méditerranéen*, Luxembourg 1986, 29–58; Gehrig and Niemeyer, op. cit. (n. 25); Maria E. Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*, Cambridge 1993.

²⁸ See p. 610.

NEAR EASTERN ELEMENTS IN GREEK CULTURE

In the remainder of this chapter we shall look at a number of ways in which Greek material and social culture was affected by that of the Near East, or at any rate shared common features with it, whether resulting from diffusion, parallel evolution, or the persistence of substrate elements

Arts and crafts

In the case of arts and crafts we certainly have to do with direct transmission. Pictorial and decorative motifs were copied, manufacturing techniques were taken over. This happened at successive epochs, from the early Mycenaean period to the Archaic age.

In a meticulous recent survey of the diffusion of artistic motifs in the Bronze Age²⁹ the following are listed as appearing in Mycenaean art in the LH I or LH II period while being attested earlier in the Near East (the transmission being in some cases via Minoan art): a particular repertoire of heraldic poses; antithetical grouping of human or animal figures about a centre-piece; symmetrical composition about an invisible median line; a hero fighting a lion or bull; the 'master/mistress of animals' (hero, god, or goddess between two animals in antithetical grouping); the sphinx; the griffin; the hippopotamus-headed demon (from Egypt via Crete); the 'sacred tree', especially as the focus of an antithetical composition, or as the object of a watering ceremony; the palm tree and palmette pattern; the papyrus plant; the rosette; the overlapping scale pattern; the convention of representing human figures in profile or with the body twisted at the waist to face the front; differentiation of male and female figures by skin colour; siege scenes with a man falling from a city wall; hunting scenes

The transfer of artistic motifs need not in itself signify any intellectual exchange between peoples. Native artists may simply draw inspiration from imported objects that come into their hands. What is more significant is the introduction from abroad of new techniques that cannot be acquired simply by studying the finished product but have to be taught by the expert to the novice. This implies either that the native craftsman spends a period abroad or, more likely, that a foreign craftsman has come to reside, at least for a time, in the country where the technique makes its new appearance.

²⁹ Crowley (1989).

A case in point is the technique of decorative metal inlay (*Metallmalerei*), which was first mastered in Syria early in the second millennium and then appears in the art of the Shaft Graves at Mycenaean.³⁰ Another product of new metal-working skills is the great sword, again found in the Shaft Graves, and a little earlier at Mallia in Crete, with antecedents in Anatolia and the Levant. It differs from all previous Hittite swords in 'the combination of length of blade, strength of hilt, and, in one type, the use of flanges for hafting, on tang or shoulder'.³¹ To achieve the length and strength the Mycenaean swordsmith must have had technical guidance, not just an exemplar to copy. Masonry skills too (to mention a larger medium) evidently travelled with the mason. Some of the fifteenth- and fourteenth-century constructions at Mycenaean and Tiryns are linked to others at Ugarit, Hattusa, and elsewhere by close similarities of structural detail.³² In the first half of the eleventh century smiths from Cyprus brought the technique of iron-working to Greece. In the ninth, jewellers from the Levant introduced the difficult techniques of granulation and filigree, which involve soldering tiny grains or strands of gold onto a ground. All these developments presuppose a more than casual encounter between representatives of different cultures.

This infusion of oriental inspiration and the increasing commercial activity of the eighth century led to such a resurgence of eastern motifs in Greek art that 'Orientalizing' has become the accepted name of the period that succeeded the Geometric around the end of that century. The models were, in the main, 'ivories, bronzes, metal reliefs, and other articles which were both precious and portable', and they came from north Syria and Phoenicia.³³ The motifs include the palmette, lotus, volute, and cable forms of decoration, lions, sphinxes, griffins, and other monsters, winged figures, animal friezes, men fighting animals, figures in particular postures, details of musculature. There are new forms of product such as the bronze cauldron with siren, bull, lion, or griffin heads attached round the rim; the life-size (or larger) statue, standing or seated; the architectural column; the Caryatid; the crested helmet; the round shield with central omphalos. After listing these and various other items of eastern origin that appear in Archaic Greece, a German scholar commented nearly fifty years ago: 'In view of this state of affairs it could

³⁰ See E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, Chicago & London 1964, 98 f.

³¹ N. K. Sandars, *AJA* 65, 1961, 17.

³² W. Stevenson Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, New Haven 1965, 48 f., Crowley, 250.

³³ J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, London 1977, 360; for details see the whole section, 158-66.

not be called out of the way to ask what there was in Archaic Greece that did *not* come from the orient.³⁴

Loan words

Some indication of a people's foreign contacts is given by the foreign words that enter its language. Individual items in isolation prove little. If we speak of tycoons, or of running amok, that is not evidence of significant Japanese or Malay influence on British culture (though it does reflect the fact that we have had dealings with the Far East). If, on the other hand, one can find some dozens of words coming from the same language or area of the world, that can only be the consequence of comparatively close and sustained contact.

Greek has a large proportion of words that have no satisfactory Indo-European etymology. Many of them must have been taken over from other peoples with whom Greek-speakers came into contact after their arrival in the Mediterranean area: certainly from the existing population of Greece, and very probably from the Minoans, but also from peoples living further east, in Anatolia, the Levant, perhaps even Egypt. Not all of these words can now be traced to their source, mainly because we know too little of some of the languages in question. Of those that can, a large majority are of Semitic origin, or at least have cognates current in Semitic languages. A few others may be Anatolian.

Assessments of the quantity of Semitic loan words in Greek have varied enormously. The learned Samuel Bochart (1595–1667) certainly went much too far in his attempts to identify them, as did most of those who wrote on the subject before the present century.³⁵ Knowledge of the Semitic languages was not what it is today: the study of Akkadian was still in its youth, and Ugaritic was still undiscovered. Scholars were too easily satisfied with partial phonetic correspondences and vague semantic relationships. This century brought an extreme reaction by philologists who sought to limit the number of such borrowings to a mere handful. So long as a link between a Greek word and some Indo-European root could be suggested, however remote, it was considered simply superfluous to entertain a Semitic etymology.³⁶ In the last thirty years the pendulum has swung back towards the centre. Émilie Masson in 1967 provided a solid basis, and since then a fair number of the older Semitic

etymologies have been brought back into favour and some new ones found. For the first time a distinguished Indo-Europeanist (Oswald Szemerényi) has played a significant part in this research.³⁷

The connections will sometimes have been complex and sometimes indirect. Some oriental words may already have made themselves at home in Greece in the Early Bronze Age, before the proto-Greek-speakers arrived, and might have entered Greek from 'Pelagian'. A likely example is the word for wine, as the vine was established in Greece at an early date. The Greek *wino-* (from which came Latin *vinum*, from which Germanic *wein*, *win*, etc.) corresponds to Semitic **wānu* (Arabic *wain* 'black grapes', Ethiopic *wāyāne* 'vine'), as also do Hittite *wiyana-*, Luwian *wiyani-*. But in north-west Semitic initial *w-* turned into *y-* not later than the middle of the second millennium; hence Ugaritic *yēnu*, Hebrew *yāyin*. If a Linear A word on a Cnossian pithos fragment is rightly read as *ya-ne* and interpreted as 'wine',³⁸ it suggests either that Crete shared in the same phonological change or that the word was a not too ancient borrowing from Canaan. The Greek form with *w-*, which appears in Linear B, must have been taken over earlier, if not from a different source (which is less likely).³⁹

Two other words of Semitic provenance, *kumīn-* 'cummin' and *maxam-* 'sesame', appear in both Linear A and Linear B,⁴⁰ and might therefore have come into Greek via Minoan rather than directly. Any Egyptian words are likely to have reached Greece by way of either Crete or Phoenicia. A few words appear both in Semitic languages and in Hittite or Luwian; in some cases the Greek form is closer to the one, in some to the other. Besides *wino-*, mention may be made of *kuanos* 'amalt, blue enamel, lapis lazuli' (Hitt. *kuwanna-*, Ug. *iqn(i)ā*, Akk. *iqnā*, late Bab. *qunā*); *nitron* 'sodium carbonate' (Hitt. *nitri*, Heb. *néter*, Aram. *nitr-*, Akk. *nit(i)ru*); *kakkabē* 'partridge' (Hitt. *kakkaban-*, Akk. *kakkabānu*, etc.); *kumbakhos* 'helmet' (Hitt. *kubahi-*, Heb. *kōba'* or *qōba'*); perhaps *elephant-* 'ivory, elephant' (Hitt. *lahpa-*), if it is from some Akkadian compound **alap X* 'ox of X'.⁴¹

³⁷ Cf. J. P. Brown, *JSS* 13, 1968, 163–91; O. Szemerényi, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 73, 1968, 194 f. = *Scripta Minora* iii, Innsbruck 1987, 1555 f.; *JHS* 94, 1974, 144–57 = *Scr. Min.* ii, 1441–54; *Gnomon* 53, 1981, 113–16; *o-o-pe-ro-si*. Festschrift für Ernst Risch zum 75. Geburtstag, Berlin & New York 1986, 425–50; B. Hemmerdinger, *Glotta* 48, 1970, 40–66; E. Salonen, *Arctos* 8, 1974, 139–44; J. P. Brown and S. Levin, *General Linguistics* 26, 1986, 71–105; Burkert (1992), 33–40, 64, 79; Bernal, i, 59 f. (trailer for a fuller discussion which has yet to appear).

³⁸ KN Z 4; C. H. Gordon, *JRAS* 1975, 157.

³⁹ Cf. Bernal, ii, 73 f.

⁴⁰ Heick, 124.

⁴¹ As proposed in *Glotta* 70, 1992, 125–8. *Kuanos* and *elephant-* are already attested in Linear B. On the question of Anatolian loan words in Greek cf. R. Gusmani, *Studi linguistici in onore di Vittore Pisani*, i (*Paideia* 24), Brescia 1969, 501–14, esp. 508–13; O. Szemerényi, *JHS* 94, 1974,

³⁴ 'Angesichts dieser Sachlage wäre es durchaus nicht als abwegig zu bezeichnen, daß man fragte, was im archaischen Hellas eigentlich *nicht* aus dem Orient herstamme' (H. E. Stier, *Historia* I, 1950, 227).

³⁵ Lewy (1895) remains a valuable repertoire of results and hypotheses formulated by that time. Masson, 11 ff., gives a brief historical survey of the question.

³⁶ Cf. Burkert (1992), 34, 174.

The total number of words which appear in Greek in or before the fifth century and for which, in my opinion, a good case has been made for a Semitic connection, satisfying the two criteria of a good phonetic correspondence and a good semantic fit, is something over a hundred. They include the names of animals, insects, and fishes, plants and plant products, minerals, vessels and containers, fabrics and garments, various other manufactured articles, prepared foods, terms used in commerce and religious cult, and the names of the letters of the alphabet. Several of them are already attested (whether directly or indirectly by derived forms, proper names, etc.) in the Linear B tablets. In addition to some already mentioned, one may cite *apēnā* 'cart',⁴² *temenos* 'assigned land' (below, p. 36), *khitōn* 'tunic',⁴³ *khrysos* 'gold'.⁴⁴ Some others may be equally old but by chance not attested in the tablets. Many, no doubt, entered the language in later periods. Dozens more appear after the fifth century, for example names of gems and plants in Theophrastus, Dioscorides, and others. Here again, the first attestation may come long after the word established itself in Greek. A considerable number turn up as dateless glosses in Hesychius. Among these are some attributed to 'the Cypriots'.⁴⁵ Cypriot Greek evidently accommodated a larger number of Semitic (presumably Phoenician) words than other forms of Greek, which is not surprising.

Besides actual loan words we should note the existence of calques, that is, Greek words or phrases used in a sense that has to be explained by reference to a foreign model. Detlev Fehling has devoted an article to this subject. Some examples will be encountered in the next few pages, and many from Greek poetic language will be presented in chapter 5.⁴⁶

Kingship

Although the institution of kingship was largely defunct in Greece in historical times, it had played a central role in at least the late Bronze

152-6 = *Scr Min* III. 1449-53 with literature. For bibliography on supposed Egyptian words see *ibid.* 147-1444 n 15.

⁴² Ug. *āpam* 'two-wheeled cart', dual of **āpn* 'wheel', cf. Heb. *ōpan* 'wheel', mod. Heb. *afnaim* 'bicycle'.

⁴³ Heb. *kittōnet*, *kētōnet* 'tunic', Ug. and Phoen. *ktm*, Aram. *kuttinā*, *kittinā*, cf. Akk. *kāt* 'flax, linen, linen cloth'; Brown, 204 f.

⁴⁴ Heb. (poetic) *hārūṣ*, Phoen. *hrṣ*, Akk. and Ug. *ḥurāṣu*.

⁴⁵ See Masson, 70-6.

⁴⁶ D. Fehling, 'Lehnübersetzungen aus altorientalischen Sprachen im Griechischen und Lateinischen', *Glotta* 58, 1980, 1-24. I will mention here one instance from classical Attic which may have escaped notice. The verb *πατεῖν*, which normally means 'tread', appears in Ar. Av. 471 and Pl. *Phdr.* 273a with the meaning 'study' an author. This seems a very strange extension from 'tread'; but it is exactly paralleled in the usage of the Hebrew verb *dāraś* and its Arabic counterpart. The semantic chain seems to be 'tread down; beat a path to; resort to; go to consult; investigate; study'.

Age, and it may have continued to do so in some regions in the early Iron Age. Evidence about its nature is available on the one hand from the Linear B tablets and on the other from Homeric and other hexameter poetry. This evidence is sufficient to show that Greek kingship shared many basic features with kingship in the Near East.

1. The king is the *overlord* of a number of local rulers who are his *vassals*. In the Mycenaean tablets there is a clear distinction between the *anax*, the king, and the *gʷasileus* (= later *basileus*), who is a lesser chief governing a district. In Homer the distinction is somewhat blurred, but it is noticeable that in the *Iliad* *anax andrōn* is primarily Agamemnon's title, and the word occurs in the plural only of horses' 'masters', whereas chieftains in a group are always *basilēes*. In the original story, presumably, the heroes went to war for Agamemnon because he could summon them to do so whenever he wished, not because they had sworn a common oath as suitors of Helen, as in the post-Homeric version.⁴⁷ The 'synoecism' of Attica attributed to Theseus represents the subordination of separate town and village head men to a single overlord. The Hebrew monarchy began with a confederation of twelve tribes deciding that they wanted a single king to rule them.⁴⁸ It has been hypothesized that the Assyrian king was 'originally only the *primus inter pares* of an amphictyonic league of sheikhs, as we know the kings of Ham to have been, and possibly also those of Na'iri'.⁴⁹

2. The king has *priestly* functions, praying and sacrificing on behalf of his people. The Greek epic implies this at least for the king away at war. It is Agamemnon in person, not some priest, who must sacrifice at Aulis on behalf of the expedition, and again at Troy, when a truce is solemnized by a sacrifice, it is Agamemnon who utters the prayer and who slaughters the victims with his own hands.⁵⁰ Aristotle takes it as one of the three defining roles of the kings of the heroic age that they were in charge of sacrifices.⁵¹ So were the Spartan kings, as we know from Herodotus.⁵² It was as a religious functionary that the *basileus* survived at Athens into the Classical period: he supervised the state cult

⁴⁷ Cf. Thuc. 1. 9. 1, and L. R. Palmer, *Mycenaean and Minoan*, London 1961, 91.

⁴⁸ 1 Sam. 8-10. The league of twelve has been compared with that of the twelve Ionian towns (Hdt. 1. 142-6), the twelve Aeolic (Hdt. 1. 149), the twelve tribes of the Pylaeon-Delphic amphictyony (Aeschin. 2. 116), the twelve cities of Etruria, and the twelve of Campania (Strab. 5. 2. 1 § 4. 3), and held to reflect a general Mediterranean pattern based on rotating monthly custody of a central shrine. Cf. M. Noth, *Das System der Zwölf Stämme Israels* (Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, 4. Folge, Heft 1), Stuttgart 1930; J. P. Brown, ZAW 98, 1986, 420 f.

⁴⁹ Oppenheim (1977), 99.

⁵⁰ Il. 3. 275-94.

⁵¹ Pol. 1285b9, 23. The other two roles are the third and fourth on my list.

⁵² Hdt. 6. 56.

and performed the most solemn and ancient sacrifices. In Israel David and Solomon are described leading their people in worship, blessing them, and making sacrifices or praying for them. 'Throughout the 400 years of the Davidic dynasty ... the king is to be found superintending the organization of worship in all its forms ... the correct conclusion to be drawn from the available evidence is that originally, at least, the king enjoyed the right of officiating at the altar in person and actually exercised this right on certain special occasions.'⁵³ He was 'a priest for ever after the precedent of Malki-sedeq'; Malki-sedeq was that king of Salem and priest of El the Most High who blessed Abraham.⁵⁴ The kings of Byblos and Sidon were priests of the Lady of Byblos and of Astarte respectively. The Assyrian king too performed sacrifices and took part in many other religious rituals. He was in effect the high priest of the god Aššur.⁵⁵ The Hittite king, similarly, became a 'priest of the gods' on his accession, and took charge of the national cults.⁵⁶

Another aspect of the king's importance in the religious field is his activity as a builder of temples and shrines. Agamemnon was remembered as having established shrines of Artemis at Megara and at Amarynthus in Euboea. Solomon built the great temple at Jerusalem, and there are various records of other kings of Israel and Judah establishing altars and sanctuaries (not all of them to Yahweh).⁵⁷ The building, embellishment, and restoration of temples was one of the main occupations of the Mesopotamian kings.

3. The king is the *leader in war*. The Mycenaean tablets record the existence of a *lāwāgetās* separate from the *wanax*, but it is not certain whether his function was military. Certainly in the mythological tradition it is taken for granted that the king leads and directs his troops in battle. (If Priam does not, it is no doubt because of his advanced age.) The Spartan kings still did so in the historical period, though not both of them at once. Indeed this had come to be their main function. When the Hebrews decided to institute a monarchy, they dismissed the objections of Samuel, saying 'No! Only let there be a king over us, so that we too may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.'⁵⁸ Saul and David gave them what they wanted. The Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite kings, too, normally led

⁵³ A. R. Johnson in Hooke, 211–13; cf. Yerkes, 147 f.; G. W. Ahlström, *CANE* i. 597 f.

⁵⁴ Ps. 110. 4, Gen. 14. 18–20.

⁵⁵ Labat, 17–25, 131–47; Oppenheim (1977), 99 f.

⁵⁶ Gurney (1952), 65 f., and in Hooke, 105–10; G. Beckman, *CANE* i. 530.

⁵⁷ Thgn. 11 f., Call. fr. 200b; 1 Ki. 6–8, 16. 32 f., 2 Ki. 23. 19, 2 Chr. 28. 24 f.

⁵⁸ 1 Sam. 8. 20

their armies in the field. Only exceptionally did they delegate this responsibility to another.⁵⁹

4. The king is a *judge*: he hears disputes and adjudicates between the disputants. Aristotle specifies this as one of the characteristic functions of the kings of the heroic age, and it is the most conspicuous role of the Hesiodic *basileus*.⁶⁰ In Israel, Mesopotamia, and Hatti the king in principle had the same role; in practice he could not personally attend to all disputes arising in his realm, and delegated the duty to others, but he remained the judge of final appeal.⁶¹

5. The symbol of the king's authority is the *mace* or *sceptre*. Homer devotes several lines to the royal *skēptron* which Pelops received from the gods and which was handed on to Atreus, Thyestes, and Agamemnon.⁶² Actual mace-heads from Cyprus and (as Cypriot imports) from Lefkandi, Lindos, and Samos have been preserved, and they resemble mace-heads found widely in the orient.⁶³ The kings of Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria, Israel, and Asia Minor likewise bore a god-given sceptre, often mentioned as the symbol of their rule.⁶⁴ A secondary symbol, often coupled with the sceptre, is the royal *throne*.⁶⁵

6. The kingship is in principle *hereditary*. That is, it normally passed from father to son, provided that the latter was strong enough to take it on and was not elbowed out by some other member of the family or some usurper. If the king had no natural son, he would adopt one as his successor designate. The king's wife might be an influential figure, and even rule as monarch after her husband's death, as in the case of Samsuramat (Semiramis), the widow of Shamshi-Adad V of Assyria, who ruled for five years (810–805) while her son was a minor.⁶⁶ In Greek mythology Clytemnestra is portrayed as being the effective ruler of Mycenae/Argos after Agamemnon's death, so long as Orestes is a child and absent; then he asserts his right to the throne. In the *Odyssey*, with Odysseus presumed dead and Telemachus still young and weak, it

⁵⁹ Oppenheim (1977), 102; Gurney (1952), 65. When Muwatalli II came to the Hittite throne in 1295, he gave his brother Hattusili command of the army, as we know from the latter's autobiography.

⁶⁰ *Th.* 85–90, 434, *Op.* 38 f., 248–64, etc.; cf. my notes on *Th.* 85–6 and *Op.* 9; Aristotle as in n.

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⁶² A. R. Johnson (as n. 53), 206 f.; Oppenheim (1977), 102; Gurney (1952), 65.

⁶³ *B.* 2. 101–8, cf. 1. 279, 2. 205 f., 9. 98.

⁶⁴ M. R. Popham and L. H. Sackett, *Lefkandi* i, London 1980, 252 and pl. 93; A. M. Snodgrass, *Cyprus and Early Greek History*, Nicosia 1988, 16 f.

⁶⁵ Akk. *haṣṣu*, Heb. *maṣṣa*, *šēbe*; KAI 214 (Zincirli, Aramaic inscription of Panammu I, c. 780–143), 3 and 8.

⁶⁶ See p. 563.

⁶⁷ Oppenheim (1977), 104; Gurney (1952), 66 f.

appears that whoever marries Penelope will become the king. The Theban throne similarly goes with Jocasta after Laius' death.

7. After his demise the king may become an *object of cult*. At Ebla the deceased kings seem to have had something like divine status, and to have been the recipients of important sacrifices and complex rites. From Babylonia and Hatti there is documentary evidence that their statues received shares of temple offerings. Memorial stelai to Assyrian kings were anointed with oil and offerings were brought to them. In a king-list from Ugarit the names are accompanied by the divine determinative.⁶⁷ In Hittite texts the death of a king is regularly expressed by saying that 'he became a god'. As for Greece, we can mention (i) the huge hero-shrine of an anonymous king at Lefkandi, dating from the first half of the tenth century; (ii) Homer's references to regular propitiatory sacrifices to Erechtheus at Athens; (iii) the eighth-century archaeological evidence for cults of heroes, often identified with famous kings of the past; (iv) the literary evidence that the Spartan kings received heroic honours after death.⁶⁸

The combination of all these features cannot be accidental. The institution of kingship as it existed in Greece in the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age reflects a pattern that is essentially that of a Near Eastern monarchy.⁶⁹

Apart from the figure of the king himself, there is the palace and its organization. As in the East, the so-called palace is not just a residence and court but a Department of Trade and Industry, with extensive storage facilities and archives. There is a work force of 'king's men' (*wanak-teroi*) dependent on the palace.⁷⁰ With its centralized administration and record-keeping, the Greek palace of the late Bronze Age represents an imposition on the economic system that simply disappeared when the palaces were destroyed around 1200. The Minoan palaces provided the immediate model, but it was the oriental kingdoms that set the pattern. In their classic study of the Linear B archives, Ventris and Chadwick

⁶⁷ In southern Mesopotamia some kings used the divine determinative during their lifetimes, but this practice died out during the Kassite period.

⁶⁸ (i) M. R. Popham, E. Touloupa, and L. H. Sackett, *Antiquity* 56, 1982, 169–74, and *Archaeol. Reports* 1981/2, 15–17, 1982/3, 12–15, 1983/4, 17; (ii) *Il.* 2. 550 f.; (iii) J. N. Coldstream, *JHS* 96, 1976, 8–17 and *Geometric Greece*, 341–57; (iv) *Xen. Resp. Lac.* 15. 9, and perhaps Alcman, *PMGF* 5 fr. 2 ii 13.

⁶⁹ Here I have considered kingship only in its material and functional aspects. There will be more to say in chapter 3 on the ideology of kingship as it is reflected in Greek and oriental literary texts.

⁷⁰ M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1973, 120, cf. B. R. Foster in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (edd.), *The Function of the Minoan Palaces (Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 10–16 June 1984)*, Stockholm 1987, 11–16.

found that the most useful and significant analogies were presented by the palace archives from Nuzi, Alalakh, Ugarit, and Ur.

In spite of some differences of climate and culture, the similarities in the size and organization of the royal palaces and in the purposes for which the tablets were written ensure close parallels, not only in the listed commodities and their amounts, but even on occasion in details of phraseology and layout.⁷¹

Treaties

Many treaties between Near Eastern rulers are known. The largest number preserved are from the Hittite empire, dating from between 1500 and 1200 and written in Akkadian or Hittite, but we also have Sumerian examples from the third millennium, Syrian ones from the second and first millennia, and Assyrian ones from between 825 and 625. Naturally there is some variation at different periods and in different countries, but there are also certain constant elements and a common basic structure which show that we are dealing with a single broad web of tradition.⁷²

Greek treaties often display the same features, and the rituals associated with Greek treaty-making and the terminology surrounding it are largely matched in the Near East. The earliest evidence comes from the Homeric account of the agreement concluded between Agamemnon and Priam in the *Iliad* (3. 67–120, 245–302). From the historical period we have a report of the formal agreement made in about 630 by the colonists of Cyrene and the mother-city Thera, original treaty inscriptions from the second half of the sixth century onward, and many literary records of treaties.⁷³ The elements that link Greek with oriental treaties are as follows.

First of all there are certain conventional stipulations that recur in many treaties over the centuries. The contracting parties bind themselves, or a great king may bind his vassal,

1. to have the same friends and the same enemies;⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, 106.

⁷² E. F. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien* (Boghazkoi-Studien, 8–9), 1923; J. Friedrich, 'Staatsverträge des Hatti-Reiches in hethitischer Sprache', *MVAG* 31/1, 1926, and 34/1, 1930; *ANET* 199–206, 529–41, 659–61; *TUAT* i, 130–89; Parpola–Watanabe (1988), H. Otten, *Die Bronzetafel aus Boghazköy*, Wiesbaden 1988; McCarthy (1978); P. Karavites, *Promise-Giving and Treaty-Making. Homer and the Near East*, Leiden 1992; Brown, 253–83.

⁷³ The material is collected in H. Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums*, ii, 2nd ed., Munich 1975.

⁷⁴ Already in Naram-Sin's treaty with the king of Elam (22nd century) McCarthy, 18; standard in the Hittite treaties, *ibid.* 32 n. 24, 182 n. 13; M. Weinfeld, *JAOS* 93, 1973, 198; Exod. 23. 22 (Brown, 263); oath of the Delian League, *Arist. Ath. Pol.* 23. 5; *SEG* 26. 461 + 28. 408 + 32. 398 = II. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1988, 312 no. 67 bis (Sparta, late fifth century); Thuc. 1. 44. 1, 3. 75. 1, *Xen. Hell.* 2. 2. 20, etc.

2. to provide military assistance when called upon, and to do so whole-heartedly;⁷⁵
3. to disclose any plots or treachery that may come to notice;⁷⁶
4. not to harbour any fugitives from the other party.⁷⁷

Then there is the convention of calling on a series of gods to witness, or swearing by them, which comes to the same thing. The list of deities may be lengthy; it may culminate in 'all the gods' of the lands in question, or 'all gods and all goddesses'. In one of the Hittite treaties it ends with 'the thousand gods of this tablet', having begun with the Storm-god and the Sun-goddess of Arinna, who may be compared to those invoked by Agamemnon as witnesses to his treaty with Priam:

Father Zeus who rulest from Ida, greatest and most glorious,
and Helios, who overseest everything and overhearest everything.⁷⁸

The Sun-goddess of Arinna was the supreme female deity of the Hittite state. But often she is preceded in the lists by the Sun-god of Heaven, who, like the Babylonian sun-god Shamash, supervised justice and so had a logical place in treaty oaths. In the Assyrian epic of Tukulti-Ninurta Shamash is treated as the god who supervised the agreement between the Assyrians and the Kassites and who punishes its violator.⁷⁹ In Greek treaties Helios recurs in some later inscriptions.⁸⁰

Agamemnon's list continues with 'the Rivers, the Earth, and you (or they) who punish dead men below if one has sworn false'. The appeal to the surrounding cosmic presences is again oriental. In treaties of Mursili II the list of divinities ends with 'the Mountains, the Rivers, the Springs, the great Sea, Heaven and Earth, the Winds, the Clouds: let these be witnesses to this treaty and to the oath'.⁸¹ In the eighth-century treaty

⁷⁵ Treaty of Hattusili III with Ramesses II, *ANET* 202 (CTH 91); of Mursili II with Duppi-Teššab of Amurru, *ibid.* 204 § 10** (CTH 62); of Aššur-nerari V with Mati'-El of Arpad, Parpola-Watanabe 11; *Inscr. Cret.* i. 307 no. 1 B 9 ff. (c. 450 BC); *IG* 3² 40. 27 ff. (Athens, 446/5); *SEG* 26. 461 (as above), 16 ff.; *Thuc.* 5. 23. 2, etc.

⁷⁶ Various Hittite treaties, *MVAG* 31/1, 1926, 54. 14 ff., 128. 22 ff., 34/1, 1930, 64. 75 ff., 116. 32 ff., *ANET* 204 § 14** (CTH 67, 68, 76, 41, 62), the eighth-century treaty from Sefire between the kings of Arpad and KTK, *SSI* ii. 46 no. 9. 1 f. = *KAI* 224 (*ANET* 660); Parpola-Watanabe, 42. 336 ff., 50. 500 ff., 63-4, *IG* 3² 40. 25; *Inscr. Cret.* i. 84 no. 1. 70 (Dreros, late third century).

⁷⁷ *MVAG* 31/1, 58. 35 ff., 68. 50 ff. (CTH 67); *ANET* 203 rev. 7 ff. (CTH 91), 204 § 13** (CTH 62), 531, 660, Parpola-Watanabe, 4. 13; *IG* 3² 14. 26 (Athens, 453/27).

⁷⁸ McCarthy, 185 (CTH 106); *Il.* 3. 276 f.

⁷⁹ *Machinist* 74-9, cf. 160 f.

⁸⁰ Philip II's treaty with Chalcis in 357/6, Bengtson no. 308 (Zeus, Ge, Helios, Poseidon); *IG* ii² 127. 38 (356) *Inscr. Cret.* i. 84 no. 1. 28 in a long list of gods.

⁸¹ *MVAG* 34/1. 16, *ANET* 205 (CTH 62); similarly in Suppiluliuma's treaty with Šattiwaza of Mitanni, *ANET* 206 (CTH 51), 'the Mountains, the Rivers, the Tigris, the Euphrates, Heaven and Earth, the Winds, the Clouds', and other Hittite treaties. For Ugarit cf. H. Gese in H. Gese, M.

from Sefire, again, named gods are followed by cosmic powers: 'before Marduk and Zarpanit ... before Shamash and Nur (= Sun and Light) ... before El and 'Elyon, before Heaven [and Earth, before Abyss] and 'Aptin, before Day and Night. Witnesses (be) all (you) g[ods of KTK and all (you) gods of Arpad!]'⁸² On a seventh-century incantation plaque from Arslan Tash (Upper Syria) we read 'Aššur has made an eternal pact with us ... and all the sons of gods and the numerous generation of all the Holy Ones, with oaths by the Heavens and the Earth, the eternal witnesses.'⁸³ The tradition was maintained in Hellenistic Crete and Carthage. The ephebes of Dreros swore by a list of gods ending with 'Earth and Heaven, and Heroes and Heroines, and Springs and Rivers, and all gods male and female'; Hannibal and his army, making a treaty with Philip V in 213, swore by a list that included Sun, Moon, and Earth, Rivers, Lakes(?), and Waters'.⁸⁴

The parties to the treaty lay dire curses upon themselves and their descendants should they break their oaths, and often these are accompanied by prayers for blessings of various kinds if they abide by the terms. This can be illustrated from the Hittite, Syrian, and Assyrian texts as well as from the Greek.⁸⁵

In the West Semitic area, as in Homer, the swearing of the treaty is accompanied by a sacrifice. At Mari in the eighteenth century 'to kill a donkey foal' was a technical term for making a covenant.⁸⁶ In the seventeenth-century treaty between Abba-il of Yamhad and Yarim-Lim of Alalakh, written in Akkadian, the document states: 'Abba-il has sworn to Yarim-Lim by the life of the gods, and he cut the throat of 1 lamb.'⁸⁷ In the same way Agamemnon after making his prayer and declaring the terms of the agreement 'severed the lambs' throats with the pitiless bronze'.

In the eighth-century Syrian and Assyrian treaty rituals the killing of an animal, together with certain other actions, becomes a piece of sympathetic magic reinforcing the curses. If the king of Arpad deals

Hofner, and K. Rudolph, *Die Religionen Alt-Syriens, Altarabiens und der Mandäer*, Stuttgart 1970, 148.

⁸² *SSI* ii. 28 no. 7. 1A 8-12 = *KAI* 222; *ANET* 659. Similarly in the Homeric passage the list of deities is followed by 'You be witnesses'.

⁸³ *SSI* iii. 82 no. 23. 8-14 = *KAI* 27.

⁸⁴ *Inscr. Cret.* i. 84 no. 1. 14-36; Polyb. 7. 9. 2. In Homer, besides *Il.* 3 l.c., we may refer to *Il.* 14. 271-9, where Hera swears on the water of Styx (cf. *Hes. Th.* 400, 775-806), lays her hands on earth and sea, and lists all the Titans in Tartarus as witnesses.

⁸⁵ *ANET* 206, 538-41, 660; McCarthy, 182, 184, 188; Otten (as n. 72), iv. 5-28; *IG* 3² 14. 16 f., 17. 33-6; *Inscr. Cret.* i. 84 no. 1. 75-96, iii. 40. 17-19, 23-5; oath of the Delphic Amphictyony, *Archon.* 3. 111. Cf. McCarthy, 40 f.

⁸⁶ S. M. Dalley, *Mari and Karana*, London 1984, 140 f.

⁸⁷ *JCS* 12, 1958, 126/13, 1959, 95, lines 39-41; McCarthy, 52, 185.

falsely with the king of KTK, 'just as this piece of wax is burned with fire, so shall Arpad and [her daughter-cities] be utterly burned ... just as this man of wax is blinded, so shall Mati-'El be blinded. [Just as] this calf is cut up, so shall Mati-'El be cut up and his nobles shall be cut up,' and so on.⁸⁸ Once again we have the same thing in Greece. Agamemnon's lamb sacrifice is accompanied by libations of wine, and the libations are accompanied by the prayer

Zeus greatest and most glorious, and you other immortal gods,
whichever side should first violate the oaths,
so may their brains spill to the ground as this wine does,
theirs and their children's, and may their wives be taken by others.

This is close to the bloodthirsty curses of Esarhaddon: 'May Venus the brightest of the stars make your wives lie in the laps of your enemies before your very eyes ... As the kids and lambs, male and female, are cut open and their entrails roll to their feet, so may the entrails of your sons and daughters roll to your feet.'⁸⁹ The libation of wine is even more closely paralleled in a Hittite military oath: 'Then he pours out wine and says, "[This] is not wine, it is your blood, and [as the ea]rth has swallowed this, so shall the earth also sw[allow you]r [blood] and [...]'"⁹⁰ The melting of wax figures in the Sefire ritual is paralleled in the Thera-Cyrene agreement: 'They made wax figures and burned them up, with the prayer (for which they all gathered together, men, women, boys and girls) that whoever should not abide by these oaths but transgress might drip and melt away like the figurines, himself and his offspring and his property.'⁹¹

Finally, the terminology associated with treaties.⁹² The peculiar Homeric phrase ὅρκια τέμνειν 'cut a treaty', which recurs in inscriptions and in Herodotus and Polybius, corresponds closely to West Semitic idiom. The regular expression in Hebrew for making a covenant is *kārat b'erit*, 'cut a covenant', and equivalent phrases are attested in Old Aramaic (Sefire i A 7 *gṣr* 'dy') and Phoenician (*krt* 'lt). The 'cutting'

⁸⁸ *KAI* 222. 35 ff., trs. Gibson (*SSI* ii. 31–3). Similarly in the treaties of Aššur-nerari V (Parpola-Watanabe, 8 f.) and Esarhaddon (ibid. 52, 55). The principle is extensively applied in Hittite military oaths (*ANET* 353 f.; N. Oettinger, *Die militärischen Eide der Hethiter*, Wiesbaden 1976, 6–17, 75 f.). Cf. Jer. 34. 18, 'And I will make the men who transgressed my covenant, who did not uphold the words of the covenant which they made (lit. cut) before me, (as) the calf which they cut in two and passed between the halves'; McCarthy, 56.

⁸⁹ Parpola-Watanabe, 46. 428, 52. 551.

⁹⁰ Oettinger, op. cit., 21, 74 f.

⁹¹ *SEG* 9. 3. 44–9. Cf. Burkert (1992), 67 f. For all this, and for further material on Greek ritual associated with oaths and curses, see C. Faraone, *JHS* 113, 1993, 60–80.

⁹² M. Weinfeld, 'Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and its Influence on the West', *JAOS* 93, 1973, 190–9.

from the rite of severing the sacrificial victim in two and passing between the parts, a rite still known to the Old Testament but not acted out in Homer. There is a series of other matching expressions to do with oaths, treaties, and covenants, set out in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Matching phrases to do with oaths and treaties

Greek	Hebrew	Akkadian
ὄρκος μέγας 'great oath'	š'bu'āh g' dōlāh	adē rabūti
ὄρκος ἑρκος 'oath by Zeus'	š'bu'at Yahweh	māmūt Šamaš
ἐλάττω καὶ ὅρκια 'treaty and lay down'	b'rit wāhēsed	adē u salīnu
ἐρεῖν θέλει 'lay down, establish'	šām b'rit	adē šakānu
ἐρεῖν δοῦναι 'give'	nātan b'rit	māmūtu nad ānu
ἐρεῖν ποιεῖσθαι 'make'		māmūtu ep šu
ἐλὲς ἐμπνέας εἰσελθεῖν 'enter into'	bō' babb'rit	ana (libbi) adē er ēbu
ἐρεῖν φυλάσσειν 'guard, keep'	šā marhās ar b'rit	adē našā ru ⁹³
ἐρεῖν μνησθῆσθαι 'remember'	zākar b'rit	adē has āsu
ἐρεῖν παραβαίνειν 'overstep'	ābar b'rit	māmūtu et ēqu ⁹⁴
ἐρεῖν ψεύδεσθαι 'be false to'	šā qar babb'rit	
ἐρεῖν νοσφίζεσθαι/ἐκλείπειν 'abandon'	āzab b'rit	
ἐρεῖν λυθεῖσθαι 'forget'	šā kah b'rit	
ἐρεῖν λύειν 'undo'		adē pašā ru

The Kapital

The financial term 'capital' corresponds to a Latin use of *caput*, which is a calque of Greek κεφάλαιον. The Greek in turn is a calque from the Semitic; Aramaic *rēšā*, *rē's*,⁹⁵ Akkadian *qaqqadu*, 'head' = financial 'capital'. (And κεφαλῇ, κεφάλαιον in the sense of 'sum total' also corresponds to a sense of Hebrew *rō's*.) In fact the whole conception of interest on loans came to Greece and Europe from Mesopotamia, apparently not before the first millennium.⁹⁶ It presumably came by way of the Phoenicians, who were remembered as being the first usurers.⁹⁷ Certain other economic practices which we find established in Greece by

⁹³ Also Aram. *ngr*, Hitt. *pahs*.

⁹⁴ Also Hitt. *lingaus sarra*.

⁹⁵ A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC*, Oxford 1923, nos. 10. 6, 11. 5.

⁹⁶ See M. Hudson in Kopcke-Tokumaru, 128–43.

⁹⁷ *Jyd. Mens.* 1. 9, 'interest-notchers and obol-weighers'.

the Classical period can also be traced to the Near East, such as deposit banking, marine insurance, and bottomry. The word for a forfeitable deposit, ἀρραβών, is admitted by all to be of Semitic origin.⁹⁸

Elements of the Greek system of weights also reflect the influence of the Levant. The most obvious example is the mina, Greek *mnā*, which is again a Semitic word.⁹⁹ The Mesopotamian *manā* is one sixtieth of a larger unit, Akkadian *biltu* ('load' or 'tribute'), Ugaritic *kakkaru*, Hebrew *kikkār*, Aramaic *kakrā*, and the Greek *mnā* is one sixtieth of a talent. The sexagesimal principle is not maintained in the subdivisions of the mina: the oriental mina divides into 60 shekels, but the Greek one into 100 drachmas. However, the drachma divides into six obols, so that there is an equivalence of ten obols to the shekel.

Already in the Linear B archives we find a system of weights and measures that shows connections with Babylonia. It is not taken over from the Minoan system used in the Linear A tablets but is something new.¹⁰⁰ There is a Mycenaean 'talent' that is more or less equivalent to the Babylonian 'light' talent. For dry measure there is a 'medimnos' (to use the Classical word) that divides into 60 'choinikes', just as in the Babylonian system there is a measure of similar value, the *paršiktu*, that divides into 60 *qa*. In each case there is an intermediate unit, dividing the 60 into 10 × 6 'choinikes' in the Mycenaean system and into 6 × 10 *qa* in the Babylonian.

Writing

Linear B belongs to the family of Aegean Bronze Age 'linear' scripts, which cannot be traced directly to any oriental source but which could hardly have been developed without the example of oriental scripts. The basic concept—syllabic signs combined with logograms and impressed in linear series from left to right on tablets of clay—resembles that of cuneiform, even though the signs themselves are quite different. The principles of book-keeping, as noted earlier, also show some affinity with eastern methods.

When we come to the alphabetic writing of the historical period, Greece's debt to the East stands forth in sharp relief. The Greeks themselves called their alphabetic characters 'Phoenician',¹⁰¹ and there is

⁹⁸ R. Bogaert, *Les origines antiques de la banque de dépôt*, Leiden 1966; Hudson, op. cit., 134; Masson, 30 f. ἀρραβών is now attested in a fifth-century inscription, SEG 38. 1036.

⁹⁹ Akk. *manā*, Ug. *mn*, Heb. *māneh*, Bibl. Aram. *mnē*, etc.; Masson, 32–4; Burkert (1992), 37; Brown, 307 f.

¹⁰⁰ E. L. Bennett, *AJA* 54, 1950, 221; L. R. Palmer, *The Interpretation of Mycenaean Greek Texts*, Oxford 1963, 96–102.

¹⁰¹ *Ildt.* 5. 58. 2, *SIG* 38. 37 (Teos, c. 475–450?); cf. *SEG* 27. 631 (Crete: ποινικαστάς), *IG* xi(2). 96–7 (Mytilene: φοινικογράφος). Cf. L. H. Jeffery and A. Morpurgo Davies, *Kadmos* 9,

no doubt whatever that they learned them from Phoenicians. It was not just a set of visual symbols that they took over, but a set of names for these symbols, to be recited in a fixed order. This presupposes (like the manufacturing techniques mentioned earlier) not just mute imitation of a foreign model but personal intercourse and face-to-face instruction.¹⁰²

Nor was the instructor, whoever he was, imparting a merely abstract art to be exercised by the pupil with whatever implements, and on whatever kinds of surface, it might take his fancy to employ. He was teaching something that the Greeks observed to be generally done with a stylus on folding waxed wooden tablets, or with pen and ink on leather or papyrus rolls. They adopted these media together with the script, and indeed in the case of the wooden tablets they adopted the West Semitic name for the thing, *dalt* or *delt*, δάλτος (Cypriot), δέλτος, feminine gender and all.¹⁰³

Their ideas of the purposes for which writing was useful must have been conditioned, in the first instance, by what they saw their eastern neighbours using it for. Commercial record-keeping tends to be emphasized by scholars who think of trade as more or less the only thing that brought Greeks and Phoenicians into contact. In the absence of a centralized bureaucracy, however, it is doubtful to what extent trading involved documentation. Certainly the Phoenician hawkers portrayed in the *Odyssey* do not sound as if receipts and invoices are of much concern to them. A more immediately obvious benefit of writing, perhaps, was the ability to exchange messages with absent persons, verbatim messages that would not be distorted in transmission and could be sealed for complete privacy. Phoenicians could be seen to send and receive letters, they could be seen to preserve the memory of the dead from oblivion, apparently indefinitely, by inscribing memorials; to label dedications to the gods, so that there could be no doubt about the identity of the dedicant or the status of the object deposited; and, in all probability, to preserve books containing poems or other valued compositions from earlier generations. No doubt the Greeks did not follow up every lead at once. But within a century or two of learning the alphabet they were using it for all these purposes and others besides. The seventh-century fashion for written law-codes has been seen as another imitation of eastern precedent. We have Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite law codes from the second millennium, and a Neo-Babylonian one from the seventh century, though none from Phoenicia.¹⁰⁴

[101] *Ildt.* 54.

[102] L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford 1960, 2 f.; Burkert (1992), 28 f.

[103] *CV* Wendel, 81–91; Burkert, (1992) 30 f.

[104] *ANET* 159–98; A. M. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece*, London 1980, 118–20.

Poetry books interest us especially. From the layout of the famous 'Nestor's cup' epigram (c. 730 BC), with its three verses each written on a separate line, it has been inferred that its inscriber was familiar with books of verse in which that convention was already followed, as it always was later for stichic verse.¹⁰⁵ It was a format long established in Mesopotamia. We are so used to it that it may seem self-evident, but it is not so: verse texts from Amarna and Ugarit are copied without regard to the verse divisions, and for that matter so are *Beowulf*, the *Hildebrandslied*, and the Eddic poems. In the main Babylonian scribal tradition, however, each verse was spread out to fill a line, with the first signs of each hemistich and the last sign of the verse in vertical alignment. The practice was taken over by Assyrian scribes at least. Unfortunately we have no Aramaic or Phoenician poetic manuscripts; they must have existed, but they were of perishable materials. They may well have mediated the one-verse-per-line format to the eighth-century Greeks.

Other features of oriental scribal practice found their way into Greek books in the course of time, but our almost complete lack of pre-Alexandrian evidence makes it difficult to say how far back they go. The horizontal line ruled across a cuneiform tablet to mark off sections of the text (sometimes at the beginning or end of a speech in narrative poems) seems to live on vestigially in the Greek *paragraphos*, a short line placed between verses at the left-hand margin. This already appears in the oldest surviving texts, the Timotheos papyrus and the one from Derveni, both of the fourth century BC. The practice of giving the title of the work not at the beginning of the text but in a subscription at the end also goes back to the cuneiform tablet; it is actually irrational in a papyrus roll, because when the book is rolled up the title is completely inaccessible, so that it was necessary to attach a separate label on the outside.¹⁰⁶

As in the Babylonian Assyrian tradition, the subscription may also state the number of the book in the series to which it belongs, followed by the total of the verses contained in it. Compare the colophon in a papyrus of Sappho (P.Oxy. 1231, second century AD),

Songs, (Book) 1
1320 (lines),

with one of those of the Old Babylonian *Atrahasis* epic, copied in the late seventeenth century BC:

¹⁰⁵ H. R. Immerwahr, *Attic Script. A Survey*, Oxford 1990, 18 f.

¹⁰⁶ Wendel, 24–9.

416 (lines)

Tablet 1, *When the gods as man*.

Its lines: 416.¹⁰⁷

The opening words of the Babylonian poem, 'When the gods as man', *mevo an* its title, as is usual. In Greek too, from the time of Aristophanes, poems or other works are often identified by their incipits, and in 'allimachus' great book-catalogue incipits were listed together with the current title.¹⁰⁸ Finally, when the roll was one of a series, it might display at the end a catchline giving the incipit of the following roll, so that the reader could be sure which he was to read next. This device too derives from Mesopotamia, where it can be traced back as far as the third millennium.¹⁰⁹

Time-reckoning

In several places Homer implies a division of the night into three parts. Later students cited him as evidence for an ancient division into three 'watches' (φυλακαί), whereas in Stesichorus, Simonides, and the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus* they found a division into five watches. Herodotus has a reference to 'the second watch of night', without revealing how many there were altogether in his scheme of things.¹¹⁰ The word φυλακή corresponds closely in most of its senses, including this one, to Akkadian *maṣṣartu*. The Babylonians from the earliest times divided the night (and also the day) into three *maṣṣarātu*; an expression such as 'in the night at the third watch' (*mūšum šalušti maṣṣarti*) in an Old Babylonian letter exactly parallels Herodotus' 'in the night at the second watch', ἐπὲν τῆς νυκτὸς ἥ δευτέρῃ φυλακῇ.¹¹¹ The same division into three 'watches' ('*ašmôrôt*') is attested in the Old Testament, and a threefold division was also used by the Hittites.¹¹²

A later system of time-reckoning used by Greeks and Romans was that by which the day and night were each divided into twelve 'hours',

¹⁰⁷ The Babylonian colophon continues with further information. 'Hand of Nur-Aya, junior scribe; month of Nisan, 21st day, the year when King Ammisaduqa . . .' (a dating formula for the twelfth regnal year).

¹⁰⁸ Ar. (*Ach.* 1093?), *Nub.* 967, Arist. *Rhet.* 1418b29, cf. Virg. *Ed.* 5. 86; but mostly in the form 'in the elegy which begins—', etc. See E. Nachmanson, *Der griechische Buchtitel*, Darmstadt 1969 (from *Göteborgs Högskolas Årsskrift* 47, 1941), 37–52; Wendel, 29–34.

¹⁰⁹ Wendel, 2–6, 9–10. For examples in Greek papyri see S. West, *Scriptorium* 17, 1963, 314 f. ¹¹⁰ Il. 10. 252 f., *Od.* 12. 312, 14. 483; Stes. *PMGF* 268, Simon. *PMG* 644 (both ap. sch. *Rhes.* 5, it is not clear whether they used the term 'watch'); *Rhes.* 5, 527–45; *Ildt.* 9. 51. 3. φυλακή might be understood in this sense, 'period of watch', in *Arch.* 4. 9.

¹¹¹ See CAD s.v. *maṣṣartu*, § 3d. Tripartition of day and night can be traced back to the Numidian Fara period (c. 26th century): R. K. Englund, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31, 1988, 167.

¹¹² Exod. 14. 24, Jdg. 7. 19, 1 Sam. 11. 11; H. G. Güterbock, *JCS* 6, 1952, 35 f.

which expanded or contracted according to the *RENNONR*. This is first mentioned by Herodotus, who states that the Greeks learned from the Babylonians 'the twelve parts of the day' and the shadow-measuring devices called *polos* and *gnōmōn*. The usual Babylonian unit is the *bēnu* or double-hour, that is, one twelfth of the 24-hour period, but popular use of the other system is implied by an ivory prism from Nineveh which gives a monthly conversion table of diurnal and nocturnal hours into *bērū*.¹¹³

The lunar calendars used by the Greek states for official and sacral purposes resembled that of the Babylonians and Assyrians inasmuch as they reckoned days from sunset to sunset and months from new moon to new moon, oscillated irregularly between months of 29 and 30 days, and attempted to keep in step with the seasons by adding an intercalary month every two or three years on an empirical basis. The Greek months took their names not from seasonal phenomena or agricultural tasks, as among most peoples, but from festivals. The Greek calendar is thus intrinsically a sacral calendar and is likely to reflect priestly or priest-kingly initiative. The many local variations conceal a generic unity which suggests the diffusion of a pattern from a common source. Nilsson thought in terms of promulgation from Delphi in the seventh century; but the family resemblance among the Attic-Ionic month-names shows that they must have originated centuries earlier, before the Ionian migrations and accordingly before the Delphic oracle had any wide influence.¹¹⁴

One feature which is not necessarily so old, and which is perhaps a clearer pointer to some Semitic influence, is the religious significance attached to particular days of the month. The strongest association is that of Apollo with the seventh of the month (regarded as his birthday) and the first (the new moon). In the 'Days' section of Hesiod's *Works and Days* these holy days take their place in an elaborate schedule of days of the month that are favourable or unfavourable for different purposes. In its general principles and to some extent in its detail, this appears to derive from Mesopotamian tradition; but as it stands in such isolation in Archaic Greece, I will leave it for fuller discussion in the chapter on Hesiod.

Astronomy

The Greek names for the constellations show a series of correspondences with the Babylonian-Assyrian names. It is true that in many cases the Greeks grouped stars differently, making constellations with quite different shapes and boundaries from those recognized in Mesopotamia. Even where the boundaries more or less agree, the appellations often do not. Nevertheless, the number of agreements is substantial. Of the sixty constellations and stars listed in the Assyrian astronomical treatise *MULAPIN*, which dates from about 700 BC but draws on older material, sixteen, set out in Table 2, correspond both in location and in name to Greek ones.¹¹⁵ The Greek constellation of the Fishes (Pisces), pictured as a pair of fishes tied together at the tail, is called in Akkadian *zibbātu* 'the Tails', and a part of it is also called *rikis nūni* 'Bond of the Fishes'. For the Pleiades there is no correspondence in name, but it is noteworthy that the Greeks agree with the Assyrians in attributing to them the artificial number of seven.

TABLE 2. Matching Mesopotamian and Greek constellations

Akkadian name	Greek name	Modern name
lu'amū rabātū 'Great Twins'	Δίδυμοι	α and β Geminorum
allutu 'Crab'	Καρκίνος	Cancer
uṣṣulā 'Lion'	Λέων	Leo
kurru 'King'	Βασιλίσκος	Regulus (α Leonis)
lir'u šala 'corn-ear of Šala'	Στάχυς	Spica (α Virginis)
erqqu 'Wagon'	Ἀμαξα = Ἄρκτος	Ursa Major
erq samē 'Heaven's Wagon'	Ἀμαξα/Ἄρκτος ἐλάσσων	Ursa Minor
ilā 'Bull of Heaven'	Ταῦρος	Taurus
uṣṣu 'Snake'	Υδρα	Hydra
aribu 'Raven'	Κρατήρ + Κόραξ	Crater + Corvus
alānītu 'Scales'	Ζυγόν	Libra
erū 'Eagle'	Ἀετός	(most of) Aquila
uṣṣu 'Fish'	Ιχθύς νότιος	Piscis Austrinus
uridimmu 'Mad dog'	Θηρίον	Lupus + ζ Scorpii
uṣṣu qīpu 'Scorpion'	Σκορπίος	Scorpio
uṣṣu māsū 'Goat-fish'	Αἰγοκέρως	Capricornus

¹¹³ Hdt. 2.109.3; A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II: Commentary 99-182*, Leiden 1988, 34-6; B. L. van der Waerden, *Science Awakening*, ii, Leiden & New York 1974, 86-8, 285.

¹¹⁴ The Linear B tablets reveal the existence of month-names at Cnossos and Pylos in the late Bronze Age, but they are hard to interpret. They do not on the whole look as if they are based on festivals.

¹¹⁵ H. Hunger and D. Pingree, *MULAPIN. An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform*, AfO Heft 24, 1989. Cf. Otto Wenskus, *Astronomische Zeitangaben von Homer bis Theophrast* (*Hermes Einzelschriften*, 55), Wiesbaden 1990, 21-4.

There are one or two possible cases of the Akkadian name of a constellation being taken over by the Greeks and reinterpreted as a Greek word. With regard to the Wain with its concurrent name of Bear—as Homer says, ‘the Bear, which men also call the Wain’—Oswald Szemerényi has ventured the hypothesis that the Greek *Arktos*, and perhaps even her further alias, *Helike*, actually represents a Hellenization of the Akkadian *erequ*, ‘the Wagon’.¹¹⁶ Something of this kind may have happened with the star-group which we know as the Great Square of Pegasus. Its Akkadian name is *ikū* ‘Acre’, suitable enough for what looks like a rectangular field. For the Greeks it was *Hippos* ‘the Horse’ (secondarily identified as Pegasus), though Aratus points out that it has no legs and that its head and neck are harder to make out than the ‘square acreage’ (ἴσα πέλαρα) of its body. If we may suppose that its designation goes back to the Mycenaean period, it is not difficult to imagine *ikū* being reinterpreted as the Greek *ikwos* ‘horse’, which later developed into *hippos*. Our name ‘Square of Pegasus’ still perpetuates the unresolved contradiction between the geometrical figure and the phantom animal.

We do not know how old the Greek star-names are in general. The early poets mention a limited number of the most conspicuous stars and constellations (Bear, Arcturus, Pleiades, Hyades, Orion, Sirius) as being of significance for navigation or as season-markers; there is no reason why these, at least, should not have been recognized since Mycenaean times, and we cannot assume that no others were yet known. Certainly by the time of the astronomical poems ascribed to Hesiod, Phocylides of Samos (or Thales), and Cleostratus of Tenedos (sixth century?), a fair skyful must have been established. Fragments and citations of these poems attest mentions of the constellations Draco, Bootes, Eridanus, Ursa Minor, Scorpio, Aries, Sagittarius, and the Haedi (= part of Auriga). Cleostratus is credited with a zodiac. By the second half of the fifth century it is clear that there is a complete tally of constellations.¹¹⁷ The adoption of the oriental names, therefore, cannot be put later than the Archaic age, and in some instances, at least, it may go back to the second millennium. It belongs to a distinctly earlier phase than the importation of the Babylonian names for the planets, ‘star of Hermes’ = Nabu =

¹¹⁶ *Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft* 15, 1962, 190 f. = *Scr. Min.* i, Innsbruck 1987, 55 f.

¹¹⁷ See W. Gaudel, *RE* iiiA 2416 f. For Phocylides and Cleostratus see DK, nos. 5–6; W. Kroll, *RE* Supp. iv, 912 f. The zodiac with its division into twelve signs or sectors was a product of Babylonian astronomical theory; see B. L. van der Waerden, *AJO* 16, 1953, 216–30, and *Science Awakening*, II 122–6, 287.

Mercury, ‘star of Aphrodite’ = Ishtar = Venus, and the rest. These first appeared in Eudoxus, or possibly before him in Philolaus.¹¹⁸

Musical instruments

Most of the musical instruments used by the Greeks came from the Near East at one period or another. This includes their two principal instruments, the lyre in its various forms and the auloi or twinned oboe. The lyre, first attested in Palestine around the end of the fourth millennium and in Sumer in the early third, came to Mycenaean Greece from Crete and remained ever after, evolving into new types in the hands of musicians. From about 600 BC there are mentions of a distinct ‘Phoenician’ lyre, which must have been a new import. The twinned oboe too was in use in Mesopotamia from early times, and in the pre-Greek Cycladic culture of the mid third millennium. There is so far no evidence for it in Greece before the eighth century, though we cannot exclude its being known to the Mycenaeans, especially as the Minoans had a form of it, with a horn attached to one of the pipes; the classical Greeks knew this variety as ‘Phrygian auloi’.

An even more ancient oriental instrument is the harp, attested for the Hittites from the fourth millennium, for Egypt and the Cycladic culture in the third, for Cyprus and doubtfully Crete in the second, and in Greece from about 600 (with one uncertain representation from the late eighth century). The Greeks considered it to be of Lydian origin, but the oldest type of Greek harp, a vertical harp with no front pillar, is clearly a close relative of a type depicted on Babylonian and Assyrian monuments.

Other oriental instruments known in Archaic Greece are the trumpet, the cymbals (only used in certain orgiastic cults), and the castanets. Others again made their appearance in the course of the Classical period or later: the *gingros* (a type of small reed-blown pipe of Phoenician or Cretan provenance), the *nabla* (a Phoenician type of harp), the lute, the flute, and the bagpipe.¹¹⁹

When an instrument is acquired from another people, it is not handed over at the border with a ‘There, see what you can make of that’. One acquires an instrument in order to play it as one has heard and seen others play it. It comes with tuition in playing techniques and with a musical style and repertoire. The spread of instruments from the Near East to Greece must accordingly have been accompanied by some elements of

¹¹⁸ See *JHS* 100, 1980, 208. I have deliberately not touched on the more technical questions connected with the interaction of Babylonian and Greek astronomy and mathematics, such as the calculation of lunisolar and planetary cycles.

¹¹⁹ For all the above see my *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford 1992, chs. 3 and 4.

Near Eastern music. Our knowledge of ancient music is too slight for us to be able to define the extent of the influence, but there do seem to be two basic features of Archaic and early Classical Greek music that suggest links with the East rather than with Europe: the structural importance of the interval of a fourth, and the division of the fourth into semitone and major third.¹²⁰ We shall find further links in the field of cultic song when we come to consider matters connected with religion.

Another setting in which music and song had an important place was the symposium. We think of this as a characteristic institution of high society in Archaic Greece. Yet in some respects, at least, the forms of the symposium were modelled on Near Eastern fashions. It is well known that the Greeks reclined on couches while drinking and making merry. But this custom only established itself among them in the last quarter of the seventh century. In Homer people sit on chairs, they never recline in company, and it is still so in Phocylides and the genuine Theognis. In Alcman and Alcaeus, on the other hand, there are couches and pillows.¹²¹ In pictorial art, reclining first appears on Early Corinthian vases, a little before 600. In the Near East too it was a recent custom, but it began there over a century earlier than in Greece. Inveighing against the dudes of Samaria in about 750, Amos writes (6. 4-6):

(Woe to) those who lie on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches
and eat lambs from the flock and calves from within the stall,
who chatter(?) to the sound of the harp
and like David devise for themselves musical instruments,
who drink from wine-bowls
and use the finest oils to anoint themselves.

Reclining banquets with wine-waiters and music are depicted in Phoenician art of the eighth to seventh century, and a palace relief from Nineveh from about 640 shows Assurbanipal reclining in a garden on an ornamented couch and drinking, with musicians in attendance, unlike earlier Assyrian kings, who are always shown seated. There is literary and archaeological evidence for fine ivory-faced beds being manufactured in Syria from the ninth century and imported from Phoenicia by kings of Salamis in Cyprus in the late eighth; but we cannot tell whether they were for banqueting or sleeping.¹²²

¹²⁰ See *Ancient Greek Music*, 388-90.

¹²¹ Phocyl. 13 West, Thgn. 34; Alcman. *PMGF* 19, Alc. 338. 7 f., cf. Sapph. 94. 21, Sol. 24. 4, Alcmanus fr. 2 Bernabé = 2 Davies

¹²² B. Fehr, *Orientalische und griechische Gelage*, Bonn 1971, 7-18; J.-M. Dentzer, *Le motif du banquet couché dans le Proche-Orient et le monde grec du VIII^e au IV^e siècle avant J.-C.*, Rome 1982; A. Rathje in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptica. A Symposium on the Symposium*, Oxford 1990, 283 f.; H. Matthäus in K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike*, Munich 1993, 177 f.

The practice of wearing garlands on festal occasions when wine was drunk also comes from the Levant. It is attested in the Ugaritic Baal epic and reflected in Isaiah.¹²³

One elegant symbol of luxury, developed in the Near East, came to Greece twice over: the parasol. First attested on a 23rd-century relief from Nini depicting the victorious conqueror Sargon of Akkad, it appears in Mycenaean art but then vanishes again until it is reintroduced from Anatolia as a fashion accessory towards the end of the sixth century.¹²⁴ At Athens it was taken up by a clique of fops who also indulged in ear-rings and other items of Asiatic couture.

RELIGION

The religious institutions and usages of Greece from the Mycenaean to the Archaic age show particular connections with those of Syria and Palestine. The remaining sections of this chapter will be devoted to various aspects of these. Some may be disposed to see the similarities in terms of an Aegean-East Mediterranean religious 'koine', perhaps in origin pre-Greek and pre-Semitic, and to discount theories of cross-influence. However, we shall find several apparent cases of West Semitic sacral terminology embedded in the Greek language, and some Semitic divine names and titles naturalized in the Aegean.

Holy places

The oldest holy places are those fashioned by nature: trees and groves, springs, grottoes, rocks, and peaks. In Minoan and Mycenaean art there are many scenes of cultic activity set in the countryside before a large tree, which has a wall round it to mark it as sacred. Sometimes a goddess sits beneath it. In Classical times, too, many sacred precincts were distinguished by a special tree: Leto's famous palm-tree on Delos, the willow at the Samian Heraion, the olive on the Athenian Acropolis, and so on. Each was associated with a goddess (less often a god), and there might be an image of her made from the wood of the tree. Some divine images consisted of a plain wooden pillar, perhaps costumed and with a curved head or other identifying features. The holy tree may be a place of prophecy: the oak at Dodona is the obvious example, but at Delphi too the bay is associated with the Pythia's soothsaying. In some places there

The passage from the epic of Gilgamesh cited by Rathje does not refer to reclining at a feast but to lying down to sleep afterwards.

¹²³ KTU 1. 6 iv 42 f.; Isa. 28. 1-4; cf. *Jub.* 16. 30 (the Feast of Tabernacles).

¹²⁴ See M. C. Miller, *JHS* 112, 1992, 91-105.

were whole groves consecrated to the deity, like the grove of Zeus at Nemea.¹²⁵ With the sacred tree or grove a holy spring was often to be found. At Dodona there was the spring of Zeus Naios below the oak. Homer describes how the Achaeans at Aulis sacrificed on altars set around a spring under a plane-tree.¹²⁶

In the Old Testament the features of Canaanite cult that are constantly mentioned are the *bāmāh* or altar platform (see below) and the *ʾāšērāh*, the sacred tree or post that stood beside it. The *ʾāšērāh* was an object of worship as the embodiment of a (female) deity. Asherah is indeed mentioned as a goddess;¹²⁷ older forms of her name are found in the fourteenth-century Amarna texts (Ašratu), in Ugaritic (ʾatrt), and in Hittite (Asertu). Just as Judaism had to fight against tree-worship in Palestine, so later did Christianity in Syria and Islam in Arabia.¹²⁸ Certain holy trees are associated with prophetic utterance: the Soothsayers' Oak (or Terebinth) at Shechem, and the palm of Deborah at Bethel. David got an omen from the rustling of trees, as did the prophets at Dodona.¹²⁹ As in Greece, sacred trees and groves are often associated with a sacred spring.¹³⁰

Another focus of sanctity is the sacred stone, column, or cairn, whether it somehow embodies a divine force or is merely a place-marker that acquires holiness by association. In Minoan-Mycenaean art, stone columns and cairns are a feature of tree-sanctuaries and cultic scenes. In the Classical age we think of the omphalos at Delphi, the pillar of Apollo Agyieus, the ubiquitous herm, and the various sacred stones—some of them identified with deities—registered by Pausanias. The god Hermes has his name from the cairn, *herma*.¹³¹ Among other forms of piety directed towards sacred stones we may recall the curious custom of anointing them with fat or oil.¹³²

¹²⁵ C. Boettcher, *Der Baumkultus der Hellenen*, Berlin 1856, 107–21, 215–19, 226–32; M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 2nd ed., Lund 1950, 262–88; id., *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, i, 3rd ed., Munich 1967, 209–12; Burkert (1985), 28, 39, 85 f.

¹²⁶ Il. 2. 305 f.; Boettcher, op. cit., 47; Burkert (1985), 86.

¹²⁷ 1 Ki. 15. 13, 18. 19, 2 Ki. 21. 7, 23. 4, cf. 6–7; in pl., Jdg. 3. 7; as a tree or post, Exod. 34. 13, Deut. 7. 5, 12. 3, 16. 21, 1 Ki. 14. 23, 2 Ki. 18. 4, Isa. 17. 8, Mic. 5. 14, etc.; Robertson Smith, 187–90; S. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, Atlanta 1988; Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God*, San Francisco 1990, 80–94. On the numerous representations of a sacred tree in Near Eastern art see H. Danthine, *Le palmier-dattier et les arbres sacrés dans l'iconographie de l'Asie occidentale ancienne*, Paris 1937.

¹²⁸ Robertson Smith, 185 f.

¹²⁹ Jdg. 9. 37, cf. Gen. 12. 6; Jdg. 4. 5; 2 Sam. 5. 24. Cf. Robertson Smith, 195 f.; H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, ii, Cambridge 1936, 777.

¹³⁰ Robertson Smith, 167–84, 190 f.

¹³¹ Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 256–9; Burkert (1985), 39, 156; Paus. 1. 44. 2, 2. 31. 4, 3. 22. 1, 7. 22. 4, 9. 24. 3, 27. 1, 38. 1.

¹³² Frazer, ii. 73; S. West on *Od.* 3. 408.

In the Old Testament the sacred stone or pillar, *maššēbāh*, is a regular feature of the Canaanite sanctuary. From the same verbal root (*nab* 'stand') we have in Arabic *nāṣb*, denoting a rough pillar or cairn which serves in place of an altar as the place of blood sacrifice; Herodotus mentions an arrangement of seven stones which were smeared with blood drawn from parties to an Arab contract. Here and elsewhere in the Semitic area we find pillars or conical stones identified with particular deities, such as the conical Astarte at Paphos and the black cone of Elagabalus at Emesa.¹³³ In Syria and Hatti there were sacred stones which contained a divine presence and which were anointed with oil.¹³⁴ The story of Jacob provides further evidence for the practice. At Luz, and again at Paddan-Aram, after receiving revelations from God, Jacob set up a stone as a pillar and poured oil on it, and these pillars no doubt continued to be treated in this way in later times.¹³⁵ A visitor to Jerusalem in the fourth century AD saw a holy stone there that was regularly anointed with oil by Jewish pilgrims who lamented over it and tore their garments.¹³⁶

The regular Old Testament term for the cult site in the older religion of Canaan is *bāmāh*, usually translated 'high place'. Its basic meaning is a rounded flank or back, with reference either to a human or animal body or to terrain. It was used especially of man-made altar platforms of earth or stone, whether on hillsides, in groves, or in towns, serving as places for incense offerings, prayer, animal sacrifice, and feasting. It could also be used of a grave-mound of stones, but 'the word in a cultic context usually refers to constructed stone platforms used for cultic rites'.¹³⁷ It is difficult to dismiss the old hypothesis that this is the source of the Greek *bōmān*, which has no convincing etymology, and which usually means 'altar' but in Homer sometimes just a raised platform or base. It is not found in Linear B. In at least seven places the Septuagint translators used it to render *bāmāh*. The Hebrew vowel transcribed as *ā* (or by others as *ā*) was not far from being an open *o*, and in the Qumran Isaiah scroll the word is three times spelled *bwm*-, implying the pronunciation *bām*-. In Phoenician there was a regular shift of stressed *ā* to *ō*. This

¹³³ Ibid. 3. 8. 1; Tac. *Hist.* 2. 3, *Hdn. Hist.* 5. 3. 5; Robertson Smith, 200–12; Frazer, ii. 59.

¹³⁴ J.-M. Durand in *Miscellanea Babylonica. Hommage à M. Birot*, Paris 1985, 79–84; id., *Recherches au pays d'Akkad Emar*, vi/3, Paris 1986, nos. 369. 34, 370. 42 f., 373. 32, etc.; id., *ibid.* 1988, 5 f.

¹³⁵ Gen. 28. 18, 35. 14.

¹³⁶ *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, ed. P. Geyer, *Itinera Hierosolymitana saeculi iii–viii* (Corp. Anecd. Aecles. Lat., 39), Vienna 1898, 22, lines 5 f.; Robertson Smith, 232 f.

¹³⁷ P. H. Vaughan, *The Meaning of 'bāmā' in the Old Testament*, Cambridge 1974, 24, cf. 13–14. There is a separate word for altar, *mizbēah*, but in some passages the words are apparently synonymous (ibid., 31–3). Cf. also Brown, 201–4.

word is not attested in Phoenician, but one might predict *bōm^et as the Phoenician form.

Hilltop sanctuaries abounded in Minoan Crete, where they were perhaps the most important centres of communal cult, and they are known from Mycenaean and Classical Greece. They are not necessarily situated on the highest peak, but based usually on a natural rock terrace.¹³⁸ There is normally a fire-altar, that is, a place appointed for burnt sacrifice; on some sites thick layers of ash have been found, with animal bones mixed among them. On the highest peak of Lykaion in Arcadia secret sacrifices were performed on a mound of earth, designated the *bōmos* of Zeus Lykaios.¹³⁹ A passing Jew would certainly have identified this as a *bāmāh*. In the *Iliad* Zeus recalls how Hector had burned many thighbones of oxen for him 'on the peaks of Ida, and at other times again in the highest part of the city'. Already in the seventeenth century the passage was brought into connection with the biblical 'high places'.¹⁴⁰

The sacred precinct, the plot of land assigned to the god and demarcated by an enclosing wall or inscribed boundary stones, is called a *temenos*. The word is already found in Linear B, and it can also denote land assigned to a king or noble. The Greeks connected it with *temnō* 'cut', as it were a *cut-off* piece of land.¹⁴¹ But τέμνειν τὴν γῆν normally means 'ravage the land'—the absolute opposite of what may be done to God's little acre—and the noun τέμενος is anomalously formed.¹⁴² Several scholars have been struck by its similarity to Akkadian *tem(m)en(n)u* (from Sumerian *temen*), which means a title deed or boundary marker, a foundation deposit, especially a prism with a building inscription. In restoring a temple it was important to locate the old *temennu* in order to be sure of building on the truly hallowed plot. It is not difficult to see how the word might come to stand for the plot itself, and indeed in Neo-Babylonian texts it is used of the foundation platform on which a temple is built.¹⁴³ It is a small step from this to the Greek *temenos*. The word does not occur in West Semitic, so that middle-men appear to be lacking. It seems that we must postulate a direct borrowing from Akkadian-speakers in this case, or else reject the parallel as a mirage.

¹³⁸ A. A. D. Peatfield, *Opuscula Atheniensi* 18, 1990, 117–31; Dickinson, 267–71.

¹³⁹ Paus. 8. 38. 7

¹⁴⁰ *Il.* 22. 170–2; Bogan, 404.

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Il.* 6. 194 καὶ μὲν οἱ Λύκιοι τέμενος τόμον ἔροχον ἄλλων, 20. 184.

¹⁴² See J. Manessy-Guitton, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 71, 1966, 14–33; *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique* 67, 1972, 90 f.

¹⁴³ R. S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia*, New Haven 1968, 147–50.

The idea that a temple or altar may serve as a temporary place of asylum for a fugitive, for example for a man who has committed involuntary homicide, is common to Ugaritic, biblical, and Greek sacrificial law. Many Phoenician and Syrian towns too had sanctuaries that were known as places of asylum. As for the Greek idea of sacred land in which it is forbidden to cut the vegetation, kill the livestock, or introduce impurity, this is paralleled at least in ancient Arabia. There too some areas were so holy that they might not be trodden at all; there too a sacred plot might contain the tomb of some mighty man of the past; there too certain sanctuaries offered asylum to fugitives.¹⁴⁴

More concrete archaeological evidence of Levantine influence on Greek religion is provided by cult edifices. In the thirteenth century there appear at Mycenaean and Phylakopi (Melos) linked pairs of chapels with particular architectural features (a corner entrance, and a platform for cult images on the wall diagonally opposite) which follow a pattern established earlier in the Levant and found mostly at maritime posts and harbour sites. From the peripheral position of the Mycenaean site and the post-palatial development of the Phylakopi one it is inferred that they were 'popular', not royal foundations, used in part by foreign merchants.¹⁴⁵ One of the Phylakopi shrines apparently contained two bronze figurines of a god in smiting pose, a distinctively Syrian (and earlier Egyptian) type that invaded the late Mycenaean world via Cyprus and Rhodes and later provided the model for Greek representations of Zeus and Poseidon.¹⁴⁶

These sanctuaries were relatively small, and contained more than one cult image. The temple, in the sense of a grand house for a deity who was present in the form of a unique, imposing effigy, first became established in Greece in the eighth century and rapidly spread. There was at first no single architectural model; a more uniform style developed in the seventh century. But the principle of the temple came from the Near East, where it had been established since early times. It reached Cyprus several centuries earlier than it was taken up in Greece.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Exod. 21. 13 f., I Ki. 1. 50–3, 2. 28 f.; *Od.* 22. 334, 379, etc.; Robertson Smith, 142–62. The Homeric and biblical passages were compared by Bogan, 314; Krenkel, 43.

¹⁴⁵ O. Negbi, *BSA* 83, 1988, 339–57; S. P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, Princeton 1992, 108–11.

¹⁴⁶ Burkert (1975); Heick, 179–82; J. D. Muhly, *Israel Exploration Journal* 30, 1980, 153–6, and in C. Renfrew (ed.), *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, London 1985, 306–10, 424 f.; Bernal, ii. 490 f.

¹⁴⁷ Burkert (1985), 47, 88–91 (with too early a dating of the Samian Heraion), and *SIFC* 10, 1992, 535 f. Rituals of bathing the cult statue, as in the Bath of Pallas that inspired Callimachus' fifth Hymn, were known to the Babylonians and Hittites as well as the Greeks: J. Laessle, *Studies on the Assyrian Ritual and Series bā rimki*, Copenhagen 1955, 16 n. 20.

At Delphi and many other places, often associated with sanctuaries, there were buildings called *leskhai*, which served as public common-rooms or social centres where people sat about and talked. Ancient lexicists also identify them as public dining-halls, and since any public dinner must have been a sacrificial feast, it may be conjectured that the original function of these structures was to accommodate the feast following a public sacrifice. The Hebrews erected chambers for the same purpose and gave them virtually the same name: *liškāh*. In the First Book of Samuel (9. 19 ff.) Samuel takes Saul up to the *bāmāh*, and there some thirty (or according to the Septuagint seventy) invited guests are feasting in the *liškāh*. The word is also used of cells, store-rooms, meeting-rooms, etc., connected with the Temple. It is hard to understand why modern etymologists persist in ignoring this and in deriving *leskhē* from a supposed **lekh-skā* 'place for going to bed', as if the fact that vagrants sometimes slept there were basic to the concept. Even if it had been, no one would have predicted such a strange word-formation.¹⁴⁸

There are in Greece a few place-names which are simply the plural of a goddess's name. Athens is the obvious example: 'Αθήναι corresponds to the Homeric form of Athena's name, 'Αθήνη.¹⁴⁹ Others are Potniai and Hestiai, and perhaps Alalkomenai, Therapnai, Mykenai, Thebai, Melainai, Plataiai, where presumptive old goddesses have been remembered only as surnames of a major goddess or as local nymphs.¹⁵⁰ We find the same phenomenon in Canaan, where Ashtaroth, Anathoth, and Bealoth are the plurals of the goddesses 'Aštart, 'Anat, and Ba'al.¹⁵¹ The last means Mistress, so that Bealoth corresponds exactly to Potniai.

Sacrifice

In the Near East as in Greece, sacrifice may be made either at regular fixed times, as part of daily, monthly, or annual routine, or occasionally, in response to some special event or need. It may be done, for example,

¹⁴⁸ See now W. Burkert, 'Lescha-Liskah', in B. Janowski et al. (edd.), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 129), Göttingen 1993, 19–38. It should be noted that *liškāh* has no known Semitic etymology, and Gordon (1955), 24 f., argued that it was an early loan word from Greek, brought from Crete by the Philistines. (Cf. Brown, 141 f.) However, Philistine names contradict the notion that they were Greek-speakers, and there is no other evidence of early Greek loan words in Hebrew.

¹⁴⁹ There is of course also an extended form 'Αθηναία (-η), which later became 'Αθηναία and 'Αθηνα. Homer once uses the singular 'Αθήνη of the city. In some of the other names too the plural alternates with the singular: Therapne, Mykene, Thebe, Plataia.

¹⁵⁰ H. Usener, *Götternamen*, Bonn 1895, 231–8; P. Kretschmer, *Einführung in die Geschichte der griechischen Sprache*, Göttingen 1896, 418–20; B. Loewe, *Griechische theophore Ortsnamen*, Tübingen 1936, 45–50.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Astour, 149. 'Anat's name is also found in the singular (Anatu, Hana) as the name of a city on the Middle Euphrates.

in thanksgiving, in fulfilment of a vow, to lend weight to a prayer, or in expiation of some wrong. It is done for preference at a special holy place, at an altar or shrine.

The basic types of Greek sacrificial offering are perfectly matched by those of Semitic, more especially West Semitic peoples.

1. Bloodless food offerings: wine, milk, oil, meal, honey, bread, cakes, fruit, vegetables, etc.¹⁵² First-fruits form a particular category: they are called 'beginnings', Akkadian *rēšētu*, Hebrew *rē'šit*, Greek ἀναρχαί. The offerings might be burned on the altar or laid out on a special 'table' (Akk. *paššūru*, Heb. *šulḥān*, Greek τράπεζα), from which they were consumed by the deity with the discreet assistance of his priests. Special mixtures of oil and meal were made; in Hebrew *bālal* 'mix' is used technically of this, and in Phoenician *bll* is the name of a sacrifice. It seems possible that Greek *pelanos*, also a sacral term for such mixtures, is derived from the Semitic root, with dissimilation of the second *l*.¹⁵³ Liquid offerings were poured out on the ground drop by drop from a shallow bowl and allowed to sink into the earth.¹⁵⁴

2. Hair: a personal offering of shorn locks that have been grown with this in view. The typical occasions are (a) coming of age, or some other rite of passage, (b) fulfilment of a vow after deliverance from illness or danger, (c) pilgrimage to a distant shrine, (d) offerings to the deity.¹⁵⁵

3. Burning of incense.¹⁵⁶ In Akkadian this type of sacrifice is *qatāru*, and the verb *qatāru* 'make smoke' is used in connection with it, as are Hebrew *qāṭar* and cognate nouns. It has been suggested that Greek *kathar-* 'pure, clean' derives from this Semitic root, from ritual purification with censers.¹⁵⁷ The Greek incense-burner developed from Mesopotamian models, and the earliest examples are of Phoenician manufacture.¹⁵⁸ Some of the same incenses were burned on it as in the East: cedar chips, myrrh, frankincense. Cedar, *kedros*, perhaps took its

¹⁵² Robertson Smith, 219–32, 239–42; Yerkes, 161–8.

¹⁵³ The change of *b* to *p* is irregular, but cf. *plinthis* from **ibintu* (Ug. *ibnt*, Aram. *ibntā*, Heb. *ibnt*, Akk. *ibintu*).

¹⁵⁴ Burkert (1985), 70–2; Matthäus (as n. 122), 181 f.

¹⁵⁵ Robertson Smith, 325–33; Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, i. 136–8; Burkert (1985), 70 with literature cited ibid. 373 f.

¹⁵⁶ H. von Hentze, *Die Rauchopfer bei den Griechen*, Berlin 1894; R. Pfister, *RE* 1A (1914), 110–11; Usener, *Opferitus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer*, Kristiania 1915, 198–260; W. Mead, *RE* Supp. xv (1978), 741–57; Burkert (1985), 62; Brown, 212 f.

¹⁵⁷ Burkert (1975), 77. The Greek form with its theta, not tau, corresponds more exactly with *qatāru* than with the *qir* of other Semitic languages (Ug., Phoen., Heb., Arab., Ethiop.). The gods' shrines were originally wine perfumed by exposure to incense smoke (passive participle *neqītar*), as in the persuasive exposition by S. Levin, *SMEA* 13, 1971, 31–50.

¹⁵⁸ Matthäus (as n. 122), 169 with n. 23.

name from this use.¹⁵⁹ *Myrrha* and *liban* (δύσος) are both certainly Semitic loan words. There are literary references to 'Syrian smoke' at the altars, and although Plato, the old puritan, proposed to ban 'frankincense and all such foreign incenses' from his dream-city's sacrifices, a poet over two centuries later still delighted in the 'Arabian vapour' that swirled round the burning thighbones in the Delphic shrine.¹⁶⁰

4. Killing without eating. These are sacrifices, especially of a piacular nature, in which animals (or even humans) are put to death and the bodies disposed of. The commonest form of disposal was by fire (holocaust), but in some cases the carcasses were buried or thrown into some inaccessible place.¹⁶¹ At some Greek cult sites there were special underground chambers or pits made for them. These were known as *megara* or *magara*.¹⁶² The variant spellings and the peculiar meaning indicate that this is a different word from the Homeric *megaron* 'hall', and it has long been brought into connection with Hebrew *mē'ārāh*, Arabic *magārah*, 'cave' (also as a place of burial, cf. Palmyrene *m'rtā* 'sepulchre').

5. Killing and eating. This was the most central and social of cultic acts. Almost all the edible parts of the animal were cooked and consumed by those present, so that the sacrifice became a public feast. It was in fact the only occasion for a feast, as any killing of a stock animal for food was a sacrifice. Besides the meat there were bread and wine, singing and dancing, for once the solemn moment of slaughter was past, the mood was festive.¹⁶³

The Greek verb and nouns for sacrificial slaughter are based on the root *sphag-*, which has no Indo-European etymology. It seems to be attested in Linear B in the word *sa-pa-ka-te-ri-ya*, presumed to represent σφακτήρια, '(sheep) victims for sacrifice'. In the Semitic languages the equivalent root is *zbh* (Phoen., Heb.), *dbh* (Ug., Aram.), *dbḥ* (Arab.), *zb* (Akk.), all reflecting proto-Semitic **ḏbh*. In some Canaanite forms it appeared as *zbah*, as in Hebrew *zbah* 'sacrifice!' (imperative), *zbāḥim* 'sacrifices' (noun), and it seems possible that this could have been taken over in Greek as *sphag-*.¹⁶⁴ If so, we have the same nexus of hieratic

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Heb. *qitṭēr* 'incense'; Lewy, 34 f.

¹⁶⁰ Pl. *Leg.* 847c; Athenaeus, *Paean* 11 f. in E. Pöhlmann, *Denkmäler altgriechischer Musik*, Nuremberg 1970, 58.

¹⁶¹ Robertson Smith, 237–9, 348, 369–78; L. Ziehen, *RE* iii A (1929), 1669–79; K. Meuli in *Phyllobolia* (Festschr. P. Von der Mühl), Basel 1946, 201–9 = *Gesammelte Schriften*, Basel & Stuttgart 1975, ii, 924–34; Yerkes, 126–46; Burkert (1985), 63 f.

¹⁶² See A. Henrichs, *ZPE* 4, 1969, 31–7.

¹⁶³ Robertson Smith, 237–43, 252–5, 264 f.; Yerkes, 146–57; Burkert (1985), 55–9.

¹⁶⁴ J. P. Brown and S. Levin, *General Linguistics* 26, 1986, 75 f.; Brown, 199–201. An original form *zbhag-* may explain an anomaly in the spelling of the Mycenaean form: *s* preceding

form in Greek and Hebrew, *sphagai* at the *bōmos* corresponding to *zbāḥim* at the *bāmāh*.

That is not all. It is uncertain whether the sacrificial knife, Greek *mukhaltra*, has anything to do with the Hebrew poetic hapax *mēkērāh* (Isa. 49, 5, apparently a weapon). But *pelekus* 'axe', which also appears as a sacrificial implement, could well be related to Akkadian *palāqu* 'strike down, slaughter (an animal)'. And there can be little doubt that *mōmos/mōmar/mūmar* 'blemish, flaw' derives from Semitic *mmlm* 'flaw' with the same meaning. In the Hebrew Bible it is the regular term for a defect in a sacrificial animal which disqualifies it; the Septuagint translators render it by *mōmos*. It probably entered Greek as a general term and then spread to other applications, for example the description of a woman as *eidos amōmos*, 'flawless in looks'.¹⁶⁵

Greek and Semitic sacrifice agree further in a whole series of features and procedural details.¹⁶⁶

1. Oxen and sheep were the preferred victims. The animal had to be perfect. There was a tradition of sacrificing the firstborn young of animals.¹⁶⁷ A typical qualification for a heifer is that it has never been brought under the yoke.¹⁶⁸

2. The sacrificers prepared themselves by bathing and wore clean or special clothes.

3. The ceremony began with a procession in which the victim was led to the altar accompanied by double oboe music and singing.¹⁶⁹

4. A sacred circle was marked out round the altar, in Babylonian ritual by sprinkling flour,¹⁷⁰ in Greek by carrying round a basket of groats and a vessel of lustral water.

5. Water was poured over the participants' hands and sprinkled over the whole area.

Another consonant is normally ignored, but it is expressed before *m*, in other words when it is voiced

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Brown, 212.

¹⁶⁶ On Greek practice see P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer*, 3rd ed., Munich 1920, 108–24; id., *Opferbräuche der Griechen*, Leipzig 1910; Eitrem (as n. 156); L. Ziehen, *RE* xviii (1919), 588–623; Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, i, 142–55; W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1983, 3–7; id. (1985), 63 f. Various comparisons with Old Testament practice were already drawn by Bogan, 246–50. See now Brown, 183–218.

¹⁶⁷ Il. 4. 102, 23. 864, 873; Robertson Smith, 462–5; Bogan, 31 f.

¹⁶⁸ Il. 10. 292–4, *Od.* 3. 382–4, *Bacch.* 11. 105; *Num.* 19. 2, *Deut.* 21. 3; Bogan, 245, Brown, 216.

¹⁶⁹ Isa. 30. 29 (*hālāl* = ulloi, cf. C. Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*, New York 1940, 118–20); Robertson Smith, 254, 338; Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 3; my *Ancient Greek Music*, 14, 20, and pl. I and 5.

¹⁷⁰ E.g. *ANET* 335, 336.

6. The victim was slaughtered over the altar, care being taken to ensure that the blood flowed onto the altar itself or into a hole under it.¹⁷¹

7. The primal guilt at shedding blood expressed itself in certain rituals through the pretence that the victim had been killed by others, or that it had offered itself voluntarily for slaughter.¹⁷²

8. In Greek ritual the victim's thighbones in particular, with some meat on them, were burned for the gods, and libations of wine were poured over them. Similarly in Babylonian rituals: 'You will slaughter a sheep; you will offer the shoulder, the fat round the intestines, and the roast meat; you will make a libation of best beer, wine, and milk.'¹⁷³

9. The god was supposed to delight in the fatty smell of the burnt offering that went up with the smoke.¹⁷⁴

10. The meat that was to be eaten by the sacrificers had all to be consumed at the feast, or else destroyed. Greek sacral regulations constantly stipulate 'No takeaway', and this is also the Jewish law.¹⁷⁵

11. The victim's hide went to the priest, or was sold for the benefit of the sanctuary.¹⁷⁶

Finally, I refer briefly to the practice of sacrificing at the site of a new shrine and leaving the remains, bones and ashes, together with libations, food offerings, and deposits of small valuables, buried under the foundations of the building. This is found in Crete in the Minoan period and again from about 800, and at Archaic Greek sites such as the Artemisia of Delos and Ephesus and the Heraion at Samos. The best parallels come from the Hittite and Mesopotamian worlds.¹⁷⁷

Attitudes of prayer

In Greece as among all the Semitic peoples, when praying to a deity, one raised one's arms to him or her with the hands apart and palms open. Hence both in Greek and in Semitic languages 'lift up the hands to (the

Heaven, etc.)' and similar expressions are used as equivalents or supplements to 'pray'.¹⁷⁸

Akkadian: 'She made a *surq*[innu-offering b]efore Shamash, she lifted up her arms'; 'he raises his hands to the gods'; '[again] he raised his hands, he prayed to Ereshkigal'; in Neo-Assyrian often 'open one's arms to' a god.

Ugaritic: 'He raised his hands to heaven, he sacrificed to the Bull his father, El.'

Old Aramaic: 'And I lifted up my hands to Ba'alshamayin, and Ba'alshamayin answered me.'

Hebrew: 'I will lift up my palms and call on thy name'; 'lift up your hands to the holy place'; 'and he spread out his palms to Yahweh'; 'and he spread out his palms toward heaven', etc.

Greek: 'He prayed aloud, holding up his hands'; 'hold up our hands to Zeus'; 'and he stretched out his invincible hands to the sky and said', etc.¹⁷⁹

A different gesture of piety, and perhaps to our way of thinking an odder one, consists in holding the right forearm vertical with the index finger raised and the other fingers closed. This is depicted on the Hammurabi stele, on Assyrian monuments from the twelfth century onwards, and in Greek art from the late Archaic period to Hellenistic times. It is typical of people standing before a divine image, or before a ritual altar.¹⁸⁰

Antiphons and responses

The songs sung in certain cults and certain ritual settings in Archaic Greece were characterized by a very distinctive feature: the use of responsorial form. A soloist would lead off (*exarkhein*) and a chorus or the general company answered, either with ritual cries or with lines of metrical song. We have evidence for this pattern in laments for the

¹⁷¹ Bacch. 11. 111, Eur. Andr. 260; Exod. 29. 12, 16, 20, Lev. 3. 2, Deut. 12. 27; Robertson Smith, 198. 201-3, 339-41; Stengel, *Opferbräute*, 105-25; Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 5.

¹⁷² ANET 336; Oppenheim (1977), 179; Deut. 21. 1-9; Robertson Smith, 309; Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 3 f., 11, 140.

¹⁷³ Il. 1. 460-3, 11. 772-5, etc.; ANET 335, 336, 337, 338 (a bull), 339, 340.

¹⁷⁴ Il. 1. 66, 317, 8. 549, 9. 500, Ar. Av. 1516-24, 1715-17; Lev. 3. 5, 16, and in holocausts Gen. 8. 21, Exod. 29. 18, 25. 41; already in the Babylonian Flood story (Atr. III v, Gilg. XI 159) and the Ugaritic Aqhat epic (KTU 1. 19 iv 22-4); Brown, 186.

¹⁷⁵ Zichen (as n. 166), 621 f.; Nilsson (as n. 166), 88 f.; Lev. 7. 15-18, 19. 6-8, 22. 30; Robertson Smith, 239; Brown, 185.

¹⁷⁶ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 7 n. 29; Brown, 213 f.

¹⁷⁷ Ellis (as n. 143); RIA iii (1971), 655-61; Burkert (1992), 53-5.

¹⁷⁸ For Greek praying attitudes see A. Furtwängler, *JDAI* 1, 1886, 217-19; G. Neumann Neuten and Gebärden in der griechischen Kunst, Berlin 1965, 78-82; D. Aubriot-Sévin, *Prière et conceptions religieuses en Grèce ancienne*, Lyon 1992, 125 ff.; for Mesopotamia, S. Langdon, *JRAS* 1910, 531-56; M. Falkner in RIA iii, 175-7. Already in Sumerian 'raising of the hand' (*su.la*) is a generic expression for 'prayer'. For praying attitudes in the world as a whole see T. Ohm, *Die Gebärden der Völker und das Christentum*, Leiden 1948, esp. 252-6.

¹⁷⁹ (Akk.) Gilg. III ii 9, BWL 116. 11, CPLM no. 32 obv. 38, (Ug.) KTU 1. 14 iv 4 (Keret epic); (Aram.) SSF ii 8 no. 5 A 11 = KAI 202 (stele of Zakkur, king of Hamath, c.780 BC); (Heb.) Ps. 63. 4(4), 134. 2, Exod. 9. 33, 1 Ki. 8. 22; (Greek) Il. 1. 450, 6. 257, Pind. Isth. 6. 41. This is only a selection from a much larger number of examples.

¹⁸⁰ M. Falkner, op. cit., 176; G. Neumann, op. cit., 82 f.

dead, in the Linos song sung at the grape-harvest, in the early dithyramb, in the paean, and in the cults of certain deities.¹⁸¹

It is noteworthy that these cult and ritual activities and settings seem generally to be pre-Hellenic and 'Aegean' in origin, if not actually Asiatic. Adonis is Semitic, Bacchos and Sabazios have strong Anatolian connections. 'Dithyramb' is a non-Greek word associated with a fertility cult of Mediterranean type. The paean and its eponymous god Paiawon (already in Linear B) have no Greek etymology either. As for the Linos song, Herodotus states that it was sung not only in Greece but also, under different names, in Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, and elsewhere.¹⁸² It is fair to say that the responsorial technique was not an integral feature of Greek musical tradition but had a somewhat marginal status, being associated with particular cults and rituals of pre-Hellenic or eastern origin. After the Archaic period it was less in evidence. In the dithyramb, for example, it gave way to other structures.

From the modern ethnomusicologist's viewpoint antiphonal or responsorial singing is typical of Africa, especially black Africa, though it is sometimes found in north Africa too. It may have been at home there from remotest antiquity, and spread from there to the Near East. At any rate it seems to have been widespread in the Near East from an early date. In many Sumerian and Akkadian liturgical compositions the wording suggests it, for instance by the use of a refrain that is constantly repeated between lines.¹⁸³ The same thing appears in the 136th Psalm, where we clearly have a cantor singing the praises of God and a congregation answering each line with the refrain 'for his steadfast love endures for ever'; the psalm is cited in the Book of Ezra as having been sung in 'answering' mode.¹⁸⁴ Elsewhere the recurring response is simply 'Amen', as in Greece it might be *Iē paiān* or *Hymēn hymenaie*.¹⁸⁵ The same verb 'answer' ('*ānāh*') is used here too. Its cognate appears several centuries earlier in an Ugaritic ritual text, where we read the instruction,

¹⁸¹ Dirges: *Il.* 18. 50 f., 314–16, 24. 720–2, cf. 723/746, 747/760, 761/776; Aesch. *Pers.* 1038 ff., *Eur. Supp.* 798 ff., *Tro.* 1287 ff. Vintaging song: *Il.* 18. 569–72. Dithyramb: Archil. 120; Hdt. 1. 23 (the citharode Arion as leader(?) of a dithyramb); Bacchylides' *Theseus*. Paean: Archil. 121; *Hymn. Ap.* 514–19, Thuc. 6. 32, Xen. *Cyr.* 3. 3. 58. Adonis cult: Sappho 140. Artemis cult: Telesilla *PMG* 717, *Hymn. Hom.* 27. 18, *Eur. Hupp.* 58–71. Bacchic: *Eur. Ba.* 140, 1057. Sabazios: *Dem. Cor.* 260. Other: *PMG* 879.

¹⁸² Hdt. 2. 79. For the special (oriental?) vocal style used in singing it see my *Ancient Greek Music*, 45 f. Isaiah mentions vintaging songs at 16. 10.

¹⁸³ S. Langdon, *Babylonian Liturgies*, Paris 1913, 1–4, 70 f.; C. G. Cumming, *The Assyrian and Hebrew Hymns of Praise*, New York 1934, 72–82. An Ugaritic text interpreted in this way: J. Obermann, *JBL* 55, 1936, 21–44.

¹⁸⁴ *Ezr.* 3. 11. Cf. *Ps.* 115. 9–11, 118. 1–4, 10–12, 15–16.

¹⁸⁵ *Deut.* 27. 14–26, cf. *Neh.* 8. 6.

Seven times he shall speak (this) on the platform, and the sacristans shall answer'.¹⁸⁶

The alternation of soloist and congregation was to remain a traditional element of Jewish (and hence Christian) liturgy. Its several patterns are described by early rabbinic sources.¹⁸⁷ In ancient times it was characteristic also of triumphal celebrations. After the crossing of the Red Sea Moses and Miriam led the men and women of Israel respectively in songs and dances of praise. This was correctly interpreted later, by Philo and in rabbinic tradition, in terms of responsorial singing.¹⁸⁸ When David returned from defeating the Philistines, the women greeted him, dancing and playing instruments, and they answered as they played, singing

Shul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

Presumably they sang the two hemistichs antiphonally, or a cheerleader sang the first and everyone 'answered' with the second.¹⁸⁹

Antiphony was also employed in lamentation. An ancient lament for Akkadian and Sumerian cities is plausibly distributed between alternating groups of female singers,¹⁹⁰ and responsorial funeral laments are implied by the remarkable Assyrian poetic fragment in which a king describes how he saw to his father's burial:¹⁹¹

The canals make lament, the irrigation-ditches keep answering.
All the timber- and fruit-trees' faces are darkened;
the orchards wept that in springtime [

Astuxerxes II liked to be entertained at dinner by his concubines playing to the harp, and we hear that one of them would lead off (*exarkhein*) and the others follow with unison song.¹⁹² Perhaps this reflects the earlier customs of the Assyrian court.

Dancing, Athletics

The Greek practice of honouring the gods at certain festivals with choral dances of men and women and with competitive sports is paralleled in

¹⁸⁶ *KTU* 1. 23. 12. Homer describes the Muses 'answering' with fair voice as Apollo plays the lyre, *Il.* 1. 604, cf. *Od.* 24. 60, *Hymn. Ap.* 189.

¹⁸⁷ C. Sachs, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World, East and West*, London 1944, 92–5; J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, New Haven 1981, 116.

¹⁸⁸ *Exod.* 15. 1–21; Philo, *Vita Moysis* 1. 180 (iv. 163 Cohn), who actually uses *exarkhein*, 1. 180; *Jewish Quarterly Review* 26, 1935/6, 207–12, 214; Kugel, op. cit., 116 n. 44.

¹⁸⁹ 1 Sam. 18. 7.

¹⁹⁰ H. Smith, *JRAS* 1932, 301–5.

¹⁹¹ Habeling (1931), 56–8; J. McGinnis, *SAAB* 1, 1987, 4.

¹⁹² Heraclides of Cyne, *FGrHist* 689 F 2.

the Near East. In Babylonia we hear of wrestling in honour of the war-god Ninurta and in honour of Gilgamesh. There was also racing at certain festivals. There was wrestling again, among entertainments such as juggling and acrobatics, in the Ishtar ceremonies at Mari in Syria.¹⁹³ The Hittites had wrestling and foot-racing as part of certain bi-annual rites performed at a sacred stone. At another of their festivals there was both foot- and horse-racing. At another, in honour of the war-god, there were whirling dancers.¹⁹⁴ King David of Israel personally leapt and whirled before the Lord following animal sacrifices on the occasion of the transport of the ark, and elsewhere we hear of group singing and dancing.¹⁹⁵

Divination

Various techniques of divination came to Greece from the Near East at different periods. In Homer the gods' will or the hidden outcome of events is often seen or suspected in a dream, the flight of a bird, a roll of thunder, or some other sudden and untoward occurrence. It does not necessarily take a seer to elucidate such portents. Ordinary people are often capable of recognizing a favourable omen or interpreting the symbolism of a dream. But if a seer such as Calchas or Theoclymenus is present, he is naturally the one who reads the sign. Calchas is called not only a *mantis* but also an *oiōnopolos*, a specialist in bird omens. Homer knows designations for two other kinds of specialist diviner too, the interpreter of dreams, *oneiropolos*, and the scrutineer of incense smoke, *thyoskoos*.¹⁹⁶ From before the time of the Persian Wars we find seers taking omens from the flames of the sacrificial altar, from the manner in which the parts of the victim burned, and from the conformation of its internal organs, especially the liver. Prometheus in pseudo-Aeschylus' play, claiming to have taught mankind the arts of divination, specifies five sources of mantic knowledge: dreams; *klēdones* and *enodioi symboloi*, that is, omens from things said or encountered by chance; the flight of birds; the aspect of entrails; the flames of the burnt sacrifice.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ BWL 120, 6 f.; J. M. Sasson in H. A. Hoffner (ed.), *Orient and Occident. Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon*, Neukirchen 1973, 153 n. 9; Tigay, 186 f.; CAD s.vv. *abarū B*, *ša abārī*, and *lismā*. The god Nabu, whom the Greeks identified with Hermes, had a title *Nabū ša lismē*, 'Nabu of races', which we may compare with Hermes' title *enagōnios*.

¹⁹⁴ A. Goetze, *Kleinastene*, 2nd ed., Munich 1957, 163, and in ANET 358 f.; Sasson, op. cit., 156; Gurney (1977), 36, 38, 40.

¹⁹⁵ 2 Sam. 6, 13–17, cf. 1 Chr. 15, 16–16, 2; Exod. 32, 6, 18 f.; Ps. 149, 3; Jer. 31, 4; Sasson, op. cit., 153–8. The Hebrew term *māhāl*, *mēhālāh*, 'dancing', may have the root meaning 'play' (ibid., 158), in which case we may compare the early Greek use of *paizein* 'play' for 'dance'.

¹⁹⁶ *Thyoskoos* does not look like a neologism, and the *thyos-* in it should not be taken in its late sense of animal victim. Cf. West (1978), 241.

¹⁹⁷ PV 484–99. For liver inspection (hepatoscopy) there is artistic evidence from the last

These forms of divination did not depend on being at some special site. Some others did. There were oracles such as those at Delphi and Dodona, where resident prophets or prophetesses prophesied using some individual technique connected with a local fixture. There were other places, such as Asclepius' sanctuaries at Trikka and Epidauros, where prophetic dreams were sought by incubation. And there were places where the ghosts of deceased prophets or others might be conjured up from Hades.

In Mesopotamia the arts of the diviner were cultivated from early times, and gave rise to an enormous literature. Assurbanipal's library contained over three hundred tablets devoted to lists of omens, a larger number than any other class of document. They fall into various series dealing with different categories of omen, the celestial, terrestrial, physiognomic, and so on. Apart from Babylonia and Assyria, we have evidence on divinatory practice from other parts of the Near East: from Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia.

Bird omens were attended to especially in Assyria, Syria, and Hatti. Hittite sources speak of a diviner called a 'bird-keeper', who apparently kept his own birds for divinatory purposes, and of a 'bird-watcher' or 'bird-operator' who observed and interpreted movements of birds in great detail. In Assyria too by the seventh century we find the 'bird-watcher', the *dāgil išṣūrī*, corresponding to the Homeric *oiōnopolos* or *oiōnistēs*, or even more exactly to the later terms *oiōnoskopos*, *anthroskopos*. Various texts mention omens drawn from the observation of birds in flight.¹⁹⁸

Dreams too had their specialist interpreters, in Sumerian *ensi*, in Akkadian *šā'ilu*, fem. *šā'iltu*. Sometimes the *šā'ilu* is coupled with the *bārū* (seer), as 'the *bārū* and *šā'ilu* were the priests who diagnosed the root of any trouble and provided the appropriate ritual for dissolving it'.¹⁹⁹ It is completely parallel to this when Achilles in the *Iliad* (1. 62–4) proposes consulting 'a seer or a priest or a dream-interpreter, who could tell us why Apollo is so angry'. Similarly the Hittite king Mursili II, about 1310 BC, appealed to the gods:²⁰⁰

winter of the sixth century, see Burkert (1992), 49 with 182 n. 14.

¹⁹⁸ Oppenheim (1977), 209 f., 219; O. R. Gurney in M. Loewe and C. Blacker (edd.), *Divination and Oracles*, London 1981, 153–5. This type of divination existed also in pre-Islamic Arabia; R. B. Serjeant, *ibid.* 231. An early fifth-century inscription from Ephesus (SIG 1167) contains a series of instructions for interpreting the flight of a bird, set out in exactly the style of a Babylonian omen text: successive sentences begin 'If (the bird does so and so)', with the apodosis is '(it is) favourable' or 'unfavourable'.

¹⁹⁹ W. G. Lambert, BWL, 284. The same root *š'ī* is regularly used in Hebrew of diviners making enquiry of the gods. It has been suggested that the name of the Selloi, the prophets at Dodona (J. 16, 234, etc.), is to be connected with this.

²⁰⁰ ANET 394 f. (CTH 378), trs. A. Goetze, cf. 396, 400; Gurney, op. cit., 143. In general see

The reason for which people are dying in the Hatti land—either let it be established by an omen, or let me see it in a dream, or let a prophet declare it!

In the Old Testament, again, dreams appear as a (deprecated) source of mantic knowledge in parallel with prophets, diviners, soothsayers, and sorcerers.²⁰¹ As for incubation, either by the interested party or by priests on his behalf, there is scattered evidence for the practice among Sumerians, Babylonians, Hittites, and Hebrews.²⁰²

Divination from incense smoke (libanomancy) was a recognized technique in the Babylonian tradition, though only two Old Babylonian tablets provide any detail.²⁰³ There is much more abundant evidence for extispicy, which the Babylonians were already practising in the early second millennium, and which spread north and west to the Hurrians, Hittites, and Canaanites. There are more texts dealing with this than with all other types of omen. Especial attention was paid to the animal's liver, but the gall bladder, lungs, breastbone, stomach, vertebrae, spleen, pancreas, heart, kidneys, and intestines were also studied. Scores of inscribed clay models of livers and other organs, dating from about 1800 BC onwards, have been found in Babylon, Hattusa, Cyprus, and various sites in Syria and northern Palestine. Many of them are reproductions of particular livers, with records of what befell the person on whose behalf the sacrifice was made. Others are idealized models for instructional purposes. Kings going on a campaign would take a seer with them to sacrifice before battle and inspect the entrails, just as we find Megistias doing for Leonidas before Thermopylae, Teisamenos for Pausanias before Plataea, and other Greek seers commonly doing later. The transmission of Babylonian techniques to the West is confirmed by a series of agreements between Greek and Akkadian technical terms for parts of the liver, and by finds of model livers in Etruria (third to second century BC).²⁰⁴

Thunder omens, in Babylonian theory, come under the general category of celestial signs, together with astrological events, eclipses, solar and lunar haloes, unseasonal rains, and so forth. They receive no

special emphasis, but they have their place in *Enūma Anu Enlil*, the collection of over seventy tablets dealing with celestial omens. We do not know to what extent early Greek seers took note of heavenly phenomena. We may be sure that they reacted to eclipses, at least;²⁰⁵ and Homer tells us that a meteor would be widely seen as a portent, as it was for the Babylonian seer.²⁰⁶

The other great Babylonian category, that of terrestrial omens, was covered in the series *Šumma ālu* (at least 107 tablets), a compilation from various earlier and more limited collections. Included in it are items of the type that the Greeks called (*enodios*) *symbolos* or *symbolon*, that is, something that one happens to encounter, for example seeing a lizard of a particular colour on the road. Bird omens come under this heading if they present themselves spontaneously and are not sought out. As for the *klēdōn* or vocal omen (that is, when someone is heard to say something that is then recognized as having an ulterior, ominous significance), there is an Akkadian equivalent, *egerrū*, which, like the Greek *phēmē*, can also mean 'rumour, reputation, oracular utterance'. The Old Testament provides examples of vocal omens of this sort.²⁰⁷ A further Babylonian tablet series, *Šumma izbu* (24 tablets), dealt with monstrous births. We know that this too was a matter upon which a Greek seer in the fifth century might base a prediction.²⁰⁸

In the great monarchies of the East virtually all divination was at the king's service, and there was little place for oracular centres to which all and sundry went with their enquiries. For these we must look to the smaller states of Canaan and the fringes of Anatolia. We do not, it is true, find there anything to rival Delphi, but we do find in Canaan indications of free oracles comparable with Dodona, and of certain sanctuaries in which a sleeper might be vouchsafed a prophetic dream.²⁰⁹ In south and west Asia Minor there were numerous oracles, mostly under Apollo's control in Classical times, as at Daphne near Antioch, Mallos, Mopsuestia, Pafara, Telmessos, Didyma, Klaros, Gryneion, and Zeleia. There were dream oracles among them, but at most sites the god's will

Oppenheim (1956), 179–373, esp. 238.

²⁰¹ Jer. 27. 9, cf. 29. 8, 1 Sam. 28. 6, 15, Zech. 10. 2.

²⁰² J.-M. Durand, *AEM* vi 461; Gurney, op. cit., 158 f.; J. R. Porter in the same volume, 202; also in pre-Islamic Arabia, Serjeant, ibid. 225 f.

²⁰³ G. Pettinato, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 41, 1966, 303–27; R. D. Biggs, *RA* 63, 1969, 73 f.; E. Leichty in M. de J. Ellis (ed.), *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*, *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Sciences* 19, 1977, 143 f.; id., *AJO* 29/30, 1983/4, 50–5.

²⁰⁴ Burkert (1992), 46–51. See further Oppenheim (1977), 212–17; Gurney, op. cit., 147–52; R. D. Biggs and J. W. Meyer, *RIA* vi (1980–4), 518 ff.; G. Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, Warminster 1989, 68 f. For possible traces of hepatoscopy in the Old Testament see Porter, op. cit., 207 f.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *Od.* 20. 356 f., *Pind. Pae.* 9. 13–20, *Thuc.* 7. 50. 4 with *Plut. Nic.* 23.

²⁰⁶ *Il.* 4. 75–84; Sultantepe tablet (E. Reiner, *JNES* 19, 1960, 28; Gurney, op. cit., 167), 'If shooting stars pass from right to left, favourable; if from left to right, unfavourable.'

²⁰⁷ A. L. Oppenheim, *AJO* 17, 1954–6, 49–55; J. Bottéro in J. P. Vernant (ed.), *Divination et rationalité*, Paris 1974, 98 f.; Porter, op. cit., 195 f.; Liddell–Scott–Jones s.vv. κληδών I, οὐμολογόν III. 2, σύμβολος II. On the series *Šumma ālu* see Oppenheim (1977), 210, 220 f.; Gurney, op. cit., 162 f.; literature cited in Foster, 694 n. 2.

²⁰⁸ E. V. Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma izbu*, Locust Valley 1970; an Old Babylonian tablet, *AEM* vi 497, cf. 501; *Plut. Per.* 6. 2.

²⁰⁹ Above, p. 34; Porter, op. cit., 202, referring to Gen. 28. 11–22 (Bethel), 46. 1 f. (Beersheba), 1 Sam. 3 (Shiloh), 1 Ki. 3 (Gibeon).

was communicated through an inspired priest or priestess. Where it was a priestess, she was sometimes represented as the god's concubine. There were also prophetesses with the title of Sibyl, as at Erythrae. The inspired prophetess that we find at Delphi, and those we find later at Dodona, show clear links with this Anatolian pattern.²¹⁰

Ecstatic prophecy is first attested in Syria, and seems to have spread from there to neighbouring countries. At Mari in the eighteenth century BC the king was plying with messages from men and women claiming to have divine information for him, and many of them were 'raving' (*muhhû*), an officially recognized class of medium. Some of them were *muhhû* of a specific god. They appear to have had long, unkempt hair, and we hear of one who uttered repeated cries, and another who devoured a live lamb before prophesying.²¹¹ In the fourteenth century Mursili mentions as a possible source of enlightenment, besides the diviner and the royal dream, the *siuniyant-*, which is the participle of a verb formed from *suma-* 'god', in other words, like Greek θεῖός, one divinely possessed. From the eleventh century we have an account of how a young man in the retinue of the king of Byblos was seized by the god and in a frenzy of possession delivered an oracle to the king. At much the same period, in the time of Samuel, we hear of groups of ecstatic prophets in Israel. By the seventh century, kings of Assyria were receiving oracles from Ishtar's temple at Arbela, the goddess speaking in the first person through a male or female 'shouter', *raggim(t)u*.²¹²

Necromancy was practised in various parts of the Near East. Babylonian lexical texts list among other kinds of diviner the *mušēlū ešemmi*, 'raiser of a ghost'. An Old Assyrian letter-writer reports that 'we have enquired of the (female) soothsayers and seers and the ghosts'. A Neo-Assyrian letter perhaps refers to a consultation by Assurbanipal (as crown prince) of his dead mother, Queen Esharra-hamat, who supports his father's nomination of him as heir to the Assyrian throne. There are three later Babylonian ritual prescriptions concerned with necromancy. A Hittite purification text describes a ritual for raising 'the ancient deities' together with a male and a female seer: they are not consulted for information, so it is not strictly necromancy, but the procedure shows remarkable parallels of detail with Odysseus' necromantic raising of Teiresias' ghost in the Homeric *Nekyia*. (I shall

²¹⁰ K. Latte, *Harvard Theological Review* 33, 1940, 9–18; Burkert (1985), 117.

²¹¹ J.-M. Durand, *AEM* i/1, 386–8, 398, 431, 434.

²¹² Mursili: *ANET* 396 § 11 (*CTH* 378). Byblos: travel report of Wen-Amun, Lichtheim, ii, 225. Israel: Porter, op. cit., 208 f.; Albright, 182–5 (repr. 209–13). Arbela: Oppenheim (1977), 221 f.; Gurney, op. cit., 145 f.; *ANET* 449 f.; Foster, 712. In general: Astour, 181–5; Burkert (1992), 79–82.

give a fuller account at the appropriate place in chapter 8.) Certain Hittite texts indicate that the kings there cultivated their ancestors and called upon them at times, and one text appears to describe how Ditanu, the first king of Ugarit, was approached for a remedy for a sick prince, and how he pronounced ritual measures to be taken. The existence of necromancy in Canaan is confirmed by the several condemnations of it in the Old Testament, as well as by the episode in which the ghost of Samuel is called up by the witch of Endor. Here again we note that it is a prophet whose shade is consulted.²¹³

Purification rituals

Divination might disclose the presence of an unsuspected evil, or the threat of an impending one. Cathartic or apotropaic rituals might then be called for. They were generally performed by priests, sometimes specialists in purification. In Greek tradition purifications are very much the province of one particular god, Apollo, especially under his name of *Phoebos* 'the Pure'.

Greek and Semitic purificatory practices coincide at several points. There is nothing remarkable in the fact that both make use of water, the most natural and obvious of cleansing agents, symbolically sprinkled, or of fumigation with censers or torches. It is rather more noteworthy that both employ procedures of purification by means of messy substances that are rubbed over the body of the person to be cleansed and then wiped off. In Greece we hear of mud, bran mash, and bran cakes being so used, in Mesopotamia of flour paste or dough, bread, and stewed tamarrisk. In both cultures it is the 'wiping off' (*ἀπομάρτειν*, *kuppuru*) that is emphasized; in the context it is equivalent to 'purify'.²¹⁴ No doubt the idea was that the stuff absorbed the pollution and that both were then wiped off together; but it is not a notion that every people arrives at.

Even more striking is the idea of cleansing with the blood of a sacrificed animal.

And you shall slaughter the ram, and take of its blood and apply it to the tip of Aaron's right ear and the tips of his sons' right ears, and to their right thumbs and their right big toes, and throw the blood against the altar all round. And you

²¹³ Gurney, op. cit., 146; Tropper (1989); O. Loretz, *Ugarit und die Bibel*, Darmstadt 1990, 140–3; Deut. 18. 11 (there shall not be found among you) 'a knoter of spells, or a consulter of ghost or knowledge-spirit, or an inquirer of the dead', cf. Lev. 19. 31, 20. 6, 27, Is. 8. 19, 19. 3, 29. 4. For the witch of Endor see 1 Sam. 28 and below, pp. 550 f.

²¹⁴ R. C. T. Parker, *Miasma*, Oxford 1983, 230 f.; *CAD* s.v. *kapāru* D; *Ludlul* III 23–8, *LEA* 102 rev. 3–4. The *Ludlul* passage does not seem to refer to sprinkling with a branch as implied by Burkert (1992), 61.

shall take of the blood on the altar and of the molting oil, and spatter it on Aaron and his clothes, and on his sons and his sons' clothes with him: and he and his clothes will be holy (*qādaš*), and his sons and his sons' clothes with him.²¹⁵

The Greeks employed purification by blood on many occasions: for priests, temples, or assemblies, or for persons suffering from madness or bewitchment.²¹⁶ It did not always involve sprinkling the patient with blood, but artistic representations show Melampus treating the deranged daughters of Proitos in this way, holding a slaughtered piglet over their heads for the blood to drip over them. More famously, the same ritual was prescribed for purification from homicide, a piglet being held aloft so as to drip its blood over the killer's hands.²¹⁷ Heraclitus ridiculed the paradoxical procedure:

In vain they try to cleanse themselves by staining themselves with blood, rather as if a man who had trodden in some mud were to try to wash it off with mud. He would be considered insane if anyone observed him acting like that.²¹⁸

Burkert quotes from a Babylonian collection a ritual for exorcizing an evil spirit from a sick man. Here a sucking pig is killed and dismembered, its blood spattered on the sides of the sufferer's bed, and the pieces of the creature smeared over his body, after which he is washed down and a few more things are done. Despite Parker's objection that in other such Babylonian rites a goat is used instead of a pig, and that they lack the Greek motif of 'washing' in the blood, an affinity with the Greek ritual can hardly be denied.²¹⁹

There were many Greek rites in which, to confer upon a multitude of people or a whole area the benefit of a slaughtered animal's magic, it was carried round the perimeter of the holy ground, the place of assembly, the city, or the entire territory. An alternative method of purifying an army or other large body of people was to have them walk between the two halves of a bisected animal (a dog).²²⁰ We have already met a similar procedure as a Near Eastern oath ritual, and noted that it seems to underlie the Greek expression ὅρκια τάμνειν. However, there is an even closer oriental parallel in a Hittite ceremony for purifying an army. The

²¹⁵ Exod. 29 20–1. Cf. Lev. 14. 2–8, 12–18 (cleansing of a leper with blood from a bird and a lamb), 48–53 (cleansing of a house that has mould on its walls).

²¹⁶ Parker, *op. cit.*, 372.

²¹⁷ Ibid. 370–2; Burkert (1992), 56 f.

²¹⁸ DK 22 B 5.

²¹⁹ Burkert (1992), 58; Parker, *op. cit.*, 373 n. 17.

²²⁰ Parker, *op. cit.*, 21 f., 225 f.; C. Faraone, *JHS* 113, 1993, 71.

men are made to march between the halves of a human victim, a goat, a puppy, and a piglet.²²¹

In Israel, as in Greece, we find the idea that the land itself may be polluted by murder or by some other great wrong committed in it, resulting in drought, plague, or the like.²²² If the source of the ill can be identified and banished (like Oedipus) or destroyed, that is one solution. But evil cannot always be traced to its source. Another way of relieving the community of it is by having an annual ceremony (or an occasional one in time of danger) at which all the pollution is magically concentrated in a scapegoat and the scapegoat is driven out. Greeks, Hebrews, Ugaritics, and Hittites all had rituals of this type. They are not very similar in detail, since in the Greek rituals the scapegoat is a man, in Israel and Ugarit it is the eponymous goat, while in the Hittite rituals various animals and humans fulfil this role. There were also Babylonian rituals for purifying a house or temple, in which a ram or ewe, having absorbed the evil, was killed and disposed of in the Euphrates.²²³

In a couple of the Greek rituals the scapegoat was chased away over the city boundary with a hail of stones, and there are stories that suggest a stoning to death. This may not have been carried out, but the idea was there. Stoning was in principle an appropriate treatment for someone who was polluting the city. As a form of communal execution it was familiar both in Greece and among West Semitic peoples. In Greece we have references to it from Homer on. It is often mentioned in the Old Testament, sometimes simply as something that a mob is liable to do to someone it is angry with, but sometimes as a punishment laid down by divine law. In an eighth-century Aramaic inscription, as in a couple of biblical passages, it appears as something ordered by a king.²²⁴

Another means of disposing of pollution was to throw it into the sea. We see this being done in an early episode of the *Iliad*, and Euripides provides a well-known statement of the principle: 'the sea washes away all the evils of mankind'. A verse of the prophet Micah implies that it

²²¹ References in Faraone, 71 n. 45; cf. Parker, 22 n. 20.

²²² Lev. 18. 25–8, Num. 35. 33, Ezr. 9. 11, Isa. 24. 5, Jer. 3. 1–3; P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Antiquarier*, 160 f.; Parker, 97, 129 f.

²²³ Greek: Burkert (1979), 59–77, Parker, 258–71, J. Bremmer, *HSCP* 87, 1983, 299–320, Israel: Lev. 16. 20 f. Ugarit: Loretz (as n. 213), 115–21. Hittites: Burkert, Bremmer, Loretz, *opp. cit.* (Gurney (1977), 47–52. Babylonian: Foster, 55; ANET 333.

²²⁴ E. König in the *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed., xvii (1906), 792–4; R. Hirzel, *Die Strafe der Steinigung*, *Abh. Sächs. Gesellsch. d. Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Kl. 27, 1909 (7); E. Fraenkel on Aesch. Ag. 1616; K. Latte, *RE* iiiA. 2294 f.; D. Fehling, *Philologische Überlegungen auf dem Gebiet der Altertumskunde* (*Zetemata*, 61), Munich 1974, 59–79. The Aramaic inscription is the one on the colossal statue of Hadad from Zincirli erected by Panamu I (c.780–743), *KAI* 214. 30 f.

was familiar also to the Hebrews: 'Thou wilt cast into the depths of the sea all our sins.'²²⁵

One more occasion for purificatory ritual may be mentioned. On waking after an alarming dream, a godly Greek might perform a lustration, make an offering of some kind, and pray to the Averting Gods (*apotropaioi theoi*) to ward off harm and make the outcome a good one.²²⁶ Clytaemestra in Sophocles' *Electra* (424) is described relating her bad dream to the Sun, and the scholiast states that this was an ancient apotropaic custom. In Babylonia and Assyria there were various little magical rituals that one might perform in similar circumstances to nullify the power of the dream, and we have a number of prayers to accompany them, or simply to ask that the dream might issue in good. They are addressed to various gods, but the great majority are to Shamash, the Sun.²²⁷

Deities and demons

Lastly let us consider the Greek pantheon itself, or at least certain corners of it in which oriental deities seem to have cast some reflection of themselves or even found a niche.

An ancient god is a complex entity, a compound made up from some or all of the following: a name, or rather, a cluster of names and titles; a poetic persona; a mythology; a doxology; an iconography; a constituency, defined by geographical or social factors; a set of prompts, I mean situations and occasions when the god is brought to mind; a 'dromenology', that is, a repertory of cult activities. That is all at the synchronic level. Each of those bundles was subject to historical change and development through time, either with or without influence from outside. It is rare for a completely new god to be introduced from abroad, unless he or she is brought by a new population element. What is much more common in Greek religion is for existing deities to merge, and more particularly for old, minor, local deities to be taken over by major, mobile, popular ones. But it is not always the established resident who loses out to the newcomer. The familiar name has a good chance of prevailing over the unfamiliar and, if not annihilating it, reducing it to a surname. Much of the existing cult and mythology may remain, augmented by certain elements contributed by the immigrant.

Among the Olympians it is Apollo who best exemplifies this.²²⁸ According to the prevailing opinion, his name is Greek, from the *apellai* or annual gatherings of tribes or clans, and he has a large native component in his nature. At the same time he has a strong link with Crete, and he is a focus for many of the orientalist elements in Archaic Greek religion surveyed in the foregoing pages: especially divination, ecstatic prophecy, purifications, and the hallowing of the first and seventh days of the month. In poetry, at least, he appears as a god of plague (which requires purifications and sacrifices to allay it), and he is equipped with a bow and arrows that serve primarily as instruments of plague and death through sickness. These attributes he seems to have taken over from the Canaanite god Resheph, who was a major deity of the Phoenicians in Cyprus and was identified by them with Apollo. Bronze statuettes of the Smiting God type (above, p. 37), representing Resheph, were in some cases taken as figures of Apollo. The name of the mythical serpent killed by Apollo at Delphi, Python, corresponds in its consonants to the Hebrew *pēten*, Aramaic *pīnā*, 'poisonous snake';²²⁹ the vowels might have been adapted to conform with the place-name Pytho, if that had a separate origin.

Another West Semitic deity, Mukal, appears in Cyprus merged with Resheph as *ršp mkl*, rendered in bilingual inscriptions as *Apollōn Amyklos* or *Amuklaios*. This has raised a serious suspicion that the Apolline centre of Amuklai in Laconia, and a similarly named shrine and month at Gortyn in Crete, also reflect cults of Mukal.²³⁰

On Anaphe near Thera we find an Apollo Asgelatas and a festival Angelaia; the attestation is late Hellenistic, but the cult may well be an old one. Burkert has plausibly connected the name with Akkadian *am(n)gallatu* 'great physician', found as a title of the Babylonian healing godless Gula. He compares the partly similar name of Asklepios (dialect Asklapios, Aiglapios, etc.), in whose cult, as in Gula's, dogs played a significant role.²³¹ Asklepios is usually regarded as the son of Apollo. But we also hear of an 'Arsippos' as his father: it seems likely that this is a Hellenization of Resheph, especially as there were Hurrian and Punic forms of his name something like Eršap.²³²

²²⁸ See Schretter (1974); Burkert (1975), *ibid.* (1985), 145.

²²⁹ J. P. Brown and S. Levin, *General Linguistics* 26, 1986, 75.

²³⁰ Burkert (1975), 68–71.

²³¹ Burkert (1992), 75–9. *Azugallatu* is the feminine form of *azugallu*, and perhaps we should think rather of this masculine as underlying the Greek forms. A *t* appears only in Asgelatas, where a Greek suffix may be assumed.

²³² Hurrian *Iršappa*, Punic *ršp*; S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, London 1930, 114 n. 2; Burkert (1975), 71 n. 109. The initial prothetic vowel before two consonants was also frequent in Cypriot Phoenician.

²²⁵ *Il.* 1. 313 f., Eur. *I.T.* 1193, Parker, 210; Mic. 7. 19; compared by Gordon (1962), 13 f., 259.

²²⁶ Aesch. *Pers.* 200–4, 216–23, Cho. 535–9, Ar. *Ran.* 1338–40, Xen. *Symp.* 4. 33, Theophr. *Char.* 16.11, Ap. Rhod. 4. 663–71, 685.

²²⁷ Oppenheim (1956), 295–307; Seux, 368–73; Fowler, 638, 674. See further below, p. 548.

Apollo's sister Artemis has strong connections with western Anatolia,²³³ but one side of her, at least, finds its best parallels in goddesses of Syria and Assyria. She is 'mistress of wild animals', *πότνια θηρῶν*, and at the same time she delights in hunting them with bow and arrows. In Assyria the same title of 'mistress of wild animals' (*bēlet nammašti*) is applied to Ishtar, who is also described as yoking lions and leopards.²³⁴ The Ugaritic equivalent of Ishtar, 'Attartu (Astarte), is described going hunting, and it has been conjectured that an echo of Astarte in this aspect is preserved in Artemis' title of Astrateia at Pyrrhichos in Laconia.²³⁵ In Ugaritic cult 'Attartu was associated with Ršp;²³⁶ possibly this Levantine pairing lies behind Apollo's association with Artemis.

Ishtar-Astarte was more usually equated, *qua* goddess of sex, with Aphrodite. Aphrodite too appears as a mistress of lions and other wild beasts, notably in lines 69–74 of the Homeric Hymn dedicated to her. The Greeks had no doubt that she came from Cyprus (or initially from Askalon in Palestine, according to Herodotus), and that was where her major cult centres were, especially at Paphos. We cannot separate the Greek Cypriot Aphrodite from the Phoenician Cypriot 'Aštart. The Greek goddess's title Ourania corresponds to the Phoenician goddess's title 'Queen of Heaven', and they have many other features in common.²³⁷ However, the Greek cult can be traced back archaeologically to the twelfth century, well before Phoenician settlement on the island. And the name Aphrodite cannot be derived from 'Aštart, as has sometimes been proposed.

Aphrodite's poetic alias Kythereia was naturally assumed by the Greeks, at least from Hesiod's time, to derive from the island of Cythera, where she had another cult centre, though not at all a prominent one. The two names must be related, but perhaps not in that way, since a derivative of *Kythēra* should not have the short *e* in the second syllable which *Kythereia* does. According to Herodotus, the Cytheran cult was established by 'Phoenicians' from the same area as those who established

the Cyprian one. At any rate we have to do with a non-Greek name. Otto Gruppe suggested a connection with Kuthar, mentioned in a Syriac source as a mythical king of Cyprus and father of Tammuz. We now realize that this must be the same as the Ugaritic god Kothar, the divine craftsman. In the *Odyssey* Aphrodite is married to the divine blacksmith Hephaestus, and Burkert explains this as a reflection of the long connection between Aphrodite-temple and smiths' workshops in Cyprus. It is fitting, then, if Kythereia is in origin a female partner of Kuthar.²³⁸

Two minor male figures connected with Aphrodite are Adonis and Eryx. Adonis, as has always been recognized, is simply the West Semitic title 'adōn or 'adōnī, '(my) lord'. His Levantine provenance was duly acknowledged in the pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue*, where he was made a son of Phoenix, the eponymous Phoenician. His cult, first attested in Sappho, is the cult of a seasonal figure who dies and is lamented by his lover Aphrodite and by his female devotees. It corresponds to Semitic cults such as those of Baal and Tammuz; the latter goes back to the Sumerian Dumuzi, the shepherd beloved by the love goddess Inanna.²³⁹ Baal is the other, more widely used Semitic word for 'master' (Akk. *bēlu*, Heb. *ba'al*, etc.), often used in divine titles and acquiring in many areas the status of a name. He appears in Greek not as a god but as Belos the father of Danaus and Aegyptus, uncle of Phoenix, and great-uncle of Adonis.²⁴⁰

Eryx was a legendary king in Cyprus (or Byblos, or Assyria). Homer makes him contemporary with the Trojan War. He is a priest of Aphrodite at Paphos, and a musician who rashly challenges Apollo to a contest. In reality he is nothing but the mythical eponymous ancestor of the Kinyradai, the guild of temple musicians who controlled the Paphian cult, and Kinyradai is a Greek rendering of a Phoenician **b'nē kinnūr* 'sons of the lyre', Semitic idiom for 'professional lyre-players'.

Leaving Aphrodite and her circle, we will look briefly at a few lesser deities.

²³³ Burkert (1985), 149.

²³⁴ Tallqvist (1938), 62, 159 f., 335; *LKA* 32 (CPLM no. 8) rev. 5–7, 'The Lady is seated on a lion ... mighty lions are crouched beneath her ... [she holds] dominion over beasts.'

²³⁵ *KTU* 1. 92; M. Dijkstra, *UF* 26, 1994, 115–17; D. R. West, *UF* 23, 1991, 379–81 and *Some Cults of Greek Goddesses and Female Daemons of Oriental Origin* (AOAT 233), Neukirchen 1995, 70–3, after L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, Oxford 1896–1909, ii, 485 f. The antiquity of this Artemis cult is suggested by the fact that the cult statue was a xoanon (Paus. 3. 25. 3).

²³⁶ Schretter, 122.

²³⁷ W. Fauth in *Der Kleine Pauly*, i, 428; Burkert (1985), 152 f. Astarte's name makes its first appearance in the Greek alphabet on a late fifth-century graffito from Corinth, where there was an Aphrodite cult with sacred prostitution (*SEG* 36. 316: ΑΣΤΑΡΤΑ). She is 'Astarte' in the Septuagint and other later references; the vocalization 'Ashtoreth' of the Masoretic text is a spurious form.

²³⁸ *Id.* 1. 105. 3; O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, Munich 1906, 1111 n. 0; Burkert (1985), 153; Brown, 245, 332. Kothar does have feminine counterparts in the *Amarna* letters, goddesses of conception and birth. Burkert (1992), 190, apparently not knowing Brown's work, suggests a connection of Kythereia with the *qtr* root (above, p. 39), as goddess of incense. The name of the island Cythera goes back at least to the fourteenth century, as it appears on the *Amarna* monument (above, p. 6) and in Linear B tablets.

²³⁹ Cf. Brown, 244–6.

²⁴⁰ It has sometimes been suggested that the feminine *ba'al* 'mistress' is the source of Athena's title *Pallas*, stem *Pallad-* (Lewy, 251; O. Carruba, *Atti e Memorie del 1° Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia*, ii, Rome 1967, 939; O. Szemerényi, *JHS* 94, 1974, 155 [= *Scr. Min.* 1492] n. 72). For Greek initial *p* representing Semitic *b* (before *i*), cf. above, n. 153.

Boreas, the god of the stormy north wind, has a name strikingly like that of the Kassite god Buriāš. We have little evidence bearing on Buriāš's nature, but it is noteworthy that he was equated with the Syrian storm-god Adad.²⁴¹

Similarity of names is not sufficient in itself to establish a connection between a Greek and an oriental deity. It needs to be supported by some correspondence in function. It remains uncertain whether the sea-god Melikertes, associated especially with the Isthmus, was originally the Tyrian Melqart, usually interpreted as 'king of the city' and equated with Heracles. Melqart was carried to the western Phoenician colonies and might be described as a god of Phoenician mariners. Their presence at Corinth is sufficiently attested. In this way it is possible to suggest how Melqart could have become Melikertes; but confirmation would be welcome.²⁴²

The case is stronger for the Kabeiroi, divinities worshipped in Samothrace, Thebes, and a few other places. Their name has often been equated with Hebrew *kabbîr* 'great, mighty' and its cognates in other Semitic languages; the word is found as a divine predicate in north Syrian personal names of the late Bronze Age, and later in the book of Job.²⁴³ The fact that the Kabeiroi were officially known as the Great Gods, Μεγάλοι Θεοί, makes the combination hard to resist. In addition, they are the sons or brothers of one Kadmilos or Kadmos, another name with a strongly Semitic appearance. (See chapter 9.) And when Hesychius records that there was a priest of the Kabeiroi who purified homicides and who was entitled *koiēs* or *koēs*, this seems too similar for coincidence to the ordinary West Semitic word for a priest, Ugaritic *khn*, Phoenician and Hebrew *kōhēn*, Aramaic *kāhēn*.

Finally, two horrible demons: Gello and Lamia, both figures of Greek popular superstition who remained alive from the Archaic period through the Middle Ages to modern times.²⁴⁴

Gello was mentioned by Sappho as a snatcher of children. According to the paroemiographer Zenobius and lexical sources, she was supposed to be the ghost of a girl who had died before having any children of her own, and she was blamed when a child died. In both name and nature she resembles the Babylonian-Assyrian *gallû*, an evil

²⁴¹ Tallqvist (1938), 10; *RiA* s.v. Buriāš; the comparison made by B. Hemmerdinger, *Glotta* 48, 1970, 49.

²⁴² Helck, 163, Astour, 209–12; cf. Roscher, ii. 2633 f.

²⁴³ Burkert (1992), 153; Brown, 36 f.; Job 34. 17, 36. 5.

²⁴⁴ See references in Burkert (1992), 197 n. 5, adding Bernhard Schmidt, *Das Volksleben der Neugriechen und das hellenische Altertum*, Leipzig 1871, 131–5, 139 f.

demon, a ghost from the underworld who is liable to seize one and afflict one with sickness or death.²⁴⁵

Lamia is more often mentioned in ancient literature. She too is a snatcher of children, a hideous thing with repulsive habits, a vampire who feeds on young men and then feasts on their flesh and blood. Again there is a comparable Mesopotamian demon with a similar name: Lamaštu, a filthy, dishevelled creature of monstrous form who kills babies, brings disease, snatches her victims away, and feeds on human flesh. Burkert has pointed out how her iconography is related to that of the Greek *Thugyon*.²⁴⁶ We do not know how the Greeks pictured Lamia, yet in modern Greek folk fantasy as recorded in the last century she still has certain features in common with Lamaštu: great size and strength, ugliness and slovenliness, long pendulous breasts (which she uses to clean her oven, not having a cloth for the purpose), and non-human hands and feet.²⁴⁷ According to myth, Lamia tried to take other people's children because, driven mad by Hera, she had killed her own. Of Lamaštu too it is written that she 'is the one of the gods her brethren with no child of her own'.²⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

This has been a fast canter across many broad fields. Their botany really calls for five or six separate books, which I hope other people will write. Meanwhile any illusions that the reader may have had about the autonomy of early Greek culture should have faded, or at any rate severely shrunk, in the wash of facts. Near Eastern influence cannot be put down as a marginal phenomenon to be invoked occasionally in explanation of isolated peculiarities. It was pervasive at many levels and at most times. Walter Burkert in his brilliant study *The Orientalizing Revolution* has focussed attention on one particular period, the early Archaic age, c. 750–650. That was no doubt an especially important phase in the history of Graeco-oriental contacts. But as we have seen,

²⁴⁵ C. Frank, *ZA* 24, 1910, 161–5; D. R. West, *UF* 23, 1991, 361–4, and *Some Cults* (as n. 235), 11, 13; Burkert (1992), 82.

²⁴⁶ W. Farber in *RA* vi. 439–46; Germain, 415 f.; D. R. West, *UF* 23, 1991, 365–8, and *Some Cults*, 293–7; Burkert (1992), 82–5. A vivid idea of Lamaštu's nature can be got from the poems and incantations relating to her in Foster, 59, 130 f., 864–7.

²⁴⁷ B. Schmidt (as n. 244), 133 f.

²⁴⁸ Foster, 865. In this connection it may be noted that the seaside monster Scylla, who snatches men from ships, and whom Stesichorus made the daughter of a Lamia, has a name which can be explained from Semitic as 'bereaved by loss of children' (Heb. *škilāh*; Lewy, 206). For extensive (but uncritical) comparisons of Lamaštu with Hecate see D. R. West, *Some Cults*, 250–88.

they had flourished productively for centuries before that, and new oriental elements continued to surface in the later seventh and sixth centuries. Here is a summary of the more datable ones that we have discussed, in order of time:

Early Mycenaean. Chariots; *Metallmalerei*; the long sword.

Later Mycenaean. Palace economy; weights and measures; lyres; parasols; the constellation *ikū*; many loan words, including words for plants, luxury materials, and manufactured articles; sacred architecture.

Eleventh century. Iron-working.

Ninth century. Goldsmiths' techniques; writing probably a little before 800.

Eighth century. Temples; ecstatic prophecy; poetry books; auloi.

Seventh century. Law-codes; reclining at feasts; harps.

Sixth century. Parasols (again); extispicy.

At the literary level too we shall find that oriental influences cannot be limited to one period. As to the extent to which they may have affected Greek poetry of the Mycenaean or early Iron Age, we shall be unable to discover more than occasional hints. But we shall see that they are already very extensive in the Hesiodic and Homeric poems. In the iambic, elegiac, and melic poets and in the tragedies of Aeschylus we shall find evidence of their continuing significance throughout the Archaic period and into the early Classical age.

2

Ancient Literatures of Western Asia

In this chapter a further part of the groundwork will be laid for the comparisons that form the main substance of the book. The attempt will be made to give the reader some idea of the history and the nature of those oriental poetic and mythical traditions from which the evidence will mainly be drawn, and to introduce the specific texts to which reference will most frequently be made. We shall look in turn at the literatures of Mesopotamia, Ugarit, the Hebrews, the Phoenicians, and the Hurrians and Hittites.

SUMERIAN AND AKKADIAN

The poetic traditions of Mesopotamia claim our attention first and will hold it longest, on several grounds: their antiquity and continuity, the quantity of the surviving material, and the prominence that it will enjoy in the following chapters.

The Sumerians, who lived in the southern alluvial plain and spoke a language with no known affinities, devised a writing system perhaps as early as 3400 BC; but for many centuries they used it only for administrative and business purposes and for lexical lists. The first literary texts appear around 2600. They include hymnic, narrative, and wisdom poetry. It is interesting that even at that remote epoch, practically two thousand years before Homer, the poet typically looked back to a time long past:

In those days, now it was in those days,
In those nights, now it was in those nights,
In those years, now it was in those years ...¹

The recurrence of similar opening formulae centuries later, and of a version of one of the same texts (the *Instructions of Shuruppak*), is evidence for some continuity of tradition, though there are extensive gaps in the written record. The Third Dynasty of Ur (21st–20th century), and especially the reign of its second and greatest king, Shulgi, seems to have been a time of considerable literary activity, with the codification of floating traditions and the composition of many new poems or new

¹ *Ashnan and her Seven Sons* 1–3, quoted by J. A. Black in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 93

versions of older ones. It is generally assumed that most of the Sumerian poetry that we have dates from this period, though the extant copies were written on the whole between 1900 and 1600. By that time the Sumerian language is believed to have been dead, or at least moribund. It was, however, inextricable from the theory and practice of cuneiform writing, and it continued to be studied and written by scribes as a learned language down to the first century BC. It also continued to be heard in traditional cultic lamentations.

As it disappeared as a living tongue so early, the importance of Sumerian literature for our inquiry is limited. There can be little question of direct influence of Sumerian upon Greek poetry at any period. But many of the themes and formal devices of Akkadian poetry derive from Sumerian tradition. In some cases Sumerian poems were translated into Akkadian line for line (these usually appear as bilinguals, with the Akkadian version interlinear), in other cases their substance was taken over in a freer adaptation. Interesting parallels with Greek texts can sometimes be cited from Sumerian texts, and in such cases there is some likelihood that the relevant feature also occurred in Akkadian texts which are now lost or which I have failed to find.

Akkadian is a Semitic language, broadly divided in the second and first millennia between a southern (Babylonian) and a northern (Assyrian) dialect. There was already an admixture of Semitic-speakers among the Sumerians before 2500. They first achieved political dominance with the extensive conquests of Sargon (Šarru-kēn) of Akkad (or Agade), a city whose site remains unidentified. He and his successors (23rd–22nd century) constitute the so-called Akkadian Dynasty.

The glory departed before a succession of Sumerian and foreign dynasties until, in the nineteenth century, hegemony passed to Babylon. The First Babylonian Dynasty lasted for some three hundred years. In linguistic and literary terms it corresponds (more or less) to what is called the Old Babylonian period. It may be regarded as the 'classical age' of Babylonian poetry: the works composed at that time are the purest in language and style, and many of them continued to be copied, re-composed, or adapted in later centuries. The use of a literary dialect characterized by archaic features, generally called the 'hymnic-epic' dialect (though not in fact restricted to these genres), implies a tradition reaching back into the third millennium.²

In the first half of the sixteenth century Babylonia fell under the domination of the Kassites, a tribal people who had been settled in parts

of the country for some time. Kassite kings ruled for the next four hundred years. This phase of Akkadian is known as Middle Babylonian/Middle Assyrian. The Kassite age has been called 'the second and last great constructive period in the history of Babylonian literature'.³ The study of written literature, which had previously been concentrated in scribal schools, now seems to have been maintained chiefly in priestly circles. There was much collecting, editing, and colligation of older material, as well as composition of new works in a rather self-conscious, learned style, with recondite vocabulary and a mainly theological emphasis. A number of named authors now appear; Old Babylonian literature, by contrast, had been in principle anonymous.

The Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian periods of the language are conventionally reckoned to begin about 1000 BC.⁴ 'Standard Babylonian', which was essentially a somewhat archaizing form of Middle Babylonian without most of the particular features of the 'hymnic-epic' dialect, maintained its prestige as the language of literary composition, even in Assyria. The great majority of surviving literary tablets come from this period, from temple, personal, and palace collections, above all from the great library established at Nineveh by Ashurbanipal (668–627).

We will now go into somewhat greater detail. The reader is advised that the following pages are not intended to be a comprehensive or even a balanced history of Mesopotamian literature,⁵ but merely an introduction to those particular genres and individual compositions to which especial reference will be made in later chapters.

Mythical narrative poems

This category comprises those narratives in which the agents are all gods, and also those in which, while the agents include human beings, the events related have no historical reference. There exist a few dozens of such texts in Sumerian, many of them not readily accessible to the non-specialist.⁶ Particular mention may be made of a group concerning Gilgamesh (actually Bilgamesh in Sumerian): *Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living* (also known as *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*), *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, *The Dream of Gilgamesh*, *The Death of Gilgamesh*

² W. G. Lambert, *BVL* 13.

³ 'Late Babylonian' refers to the Persian and Seleucid periods.

⁴ For further edification see Oppenheim (1977), 250–75; A. Falkenstein in W. von Einsiedeln (ed.), *Die Literaturen der Welt*, Darmstadt 1965, 1–21; J. Krecher and E. Reiner in W. Röllig (ed.), *Antientische Literatur* (Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft, 1), Wiesbaden 1978, 100–111. D. O. Edzard and W. Röllig, *RIA* vii (1987–90), 35–66; Foster, 1–48; *CANE* iv, 2279–2366.

⁵ For a list see *RIA* vii, 39–41. Selections are included in Jacobsen (1987); Bottéro–Kramer (1989); *TUAT* iii(3) (1993). Others are translated by Kramer, (1944) and (1958), and in *ANET*.

² W. von Soden, *ZA* 40, 1931, 163–227 and 41, 1933, 90–183; H. Gronenberg, *Untersuchungen zum hymnisch-epischen Dialekt der althabylonischen literarischen Texte*, Diss. Münster, 1972.

(these two may be parts of the same composition), and *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World*.⁷ The subject matter of these *Einzellieder* was drawn upon in the Akkadian *Gilgamesh* epic. Other Sumerian poems will be mentioned as occasion arises.

The Akkadian mythological poems are all conveniently available in modern translations with annotations.⁸ Four of them, *Atrahasis*, *Etana*, *Anzu*, and the *Gilgamesh* epic, are already attested in Old Babylonian exemplars, and they continued to be read, in various recensions, for over a millennium.

Atrahasis is, unusually, most fully preserved in its Old Babylonian form.⁹ It is a poem of some 1,245 lines, divided over three tablets. The story begins with the gods weary and complaining of having to do all the work. On Enki's suggestion mankind is created to take over the burden. At first this seems to have solved the gods' problems. But in time the human race multiplies to such an extent that its noise allows the gods no rest. Enlil, their king, decides to reduce the numbers by sending a plague. But one man, Atrah(m)hasis, 'Exceeding Wise', advised by Enki, persuades mankind to stop worshipping their gods and to make offerings only to the death-demon Namtara, who is thus shamed into staying his hand. Enlil next tries sending drought and famine. Again Enki helps Atrahasis to thwart him; this time the offerings are made to Adad, the rain-god. Finally Enlil decides on a flood. Enki, although under oath, contrives to pass to Atrahasis the instruction that he must build an ark, abandon his possessions, and save living things. In this way he and the human race survive the catastrophe.

Etana was a shorter poem, probably of about 450 lines in its Standard Babylonian version.¹⁰ Etana, king of the city of Kish, has no son, and yearns to find the plant of birth. An eagle whom he rescues from desperate straits undertakes to seek it for him. Unable to find it on earth, the bird proposes taking Etana to heaven on its back. On the first ascent Etana loses his nerve and has to be brought down again, but a

⁷ Cf. B. Alster, *CANE* iv. 2317 f. The first of the poems named is translated by D. O. Edzard, *ZA* 80, 1990, 183–90; the last by Shaffer, 99–121. Another *Gilgamesh* poem, *Gilgamesh and Agga*, has a historical setting and will be touched on in the next section.

⁸ Dalley (1989); Foster (1993); *TUAT* iii(4) (1994). Foster does not include the *Gilgamesh* epic, but there are various other versions of this, such as Maureen G. Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Stanford 1989. Some of the other poems are in Bottéro–Kramer.

⁹ The standard edition, with a valuable collection of related material, is Lambert–Millard (1969). Cf. also W. von Soden, *ZA* 68, 1978, 50–94; W. L. Moran in F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), *Language, Literature, and History. Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*, New Haven 1987, 245–56; Dalley, 1–38; Bottéro–Kramer, 527–624; Foster, 158–201; *TUAT* iii, 612–45.

¹⁰ Edition: J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Legend of Etana*, Warminster 1985; details of the reconstruction are revised in Dalley, 189–202; Foster, 437–60.

second attempt succeeds and he arrives among the gods. The end of the story is lost. It seems to have been a very ancient tale, since the flight on the eagle's back is depicted on seals of the Akkadian Dynasty. In an Assyrian bibliography *Etana* is attributed to Lu-Nanna, a sage of Ur associated with Shulgi.

Anzu was a poem of some 720 lines in its Standard Babylonian version, somewhat less in the Old Babylonian version.¹¹ It celebrates the triumph of the god Ningirsu (OBV) or Ninurta (SBV) over the bird-monster Anzu.¹² Anzu had seized the Tablet of Destinies and thus the supreme power over the world. After a series of other gods decline the challenge to kill him, Ea recommends calling on Ninurta. The strenuous battle is related at length. Anzu is destroyed, and the poem ends with a hymn-like recital of Ninurta's names and qualities. Indeed it might be regarded as a kind of narrative hymn from the start.

The *Gilgamesh* epic is deservedly the most famous work of Mesopotamian poetic literature.¹³ It is by some way the longest, and the most affecting. It became known all over the Near East—the map on p. 921 shows the sites at which copies have been found—and there are fragments of versions in other languages (Hurrian and Hittite). *Gilgamesh* appears to have been a real person, a king of Uruk sometime in the first half of the third millennium. He became a legendary figure with divine status; in late texts he is regarded as a judge in the underworld.¹⁴ As mentioned above, there were a number of Sumerian poems about his exploits. So far as the evidence goes, it seems to have been left to an Akkadian poet of the First Babylonian Dynasty to construct an extended epic. The later, Standard Babylonian version, which is much more fully preserved than the old version, seems essentially to be a revision made in the Kassite period; it is associated with the name of Sin-leqe-unninni, an incantation-priest from Uruk and another scribe from whom many later scribes claimed descent.

The Standard Babylonian version has a fixed format of twelve tablets. A brief summary of contents may be found helpful for orientation.

¹¹ H. Hunka, *Der Mythenadler Anzu in Literatur und Vorstellung*, Budapest 1975; W. Hallo and W. L. Moran, *JCS* 31, 1979, 65–115; H. W. Saggs, *AJO* 33, 1986, 1–29; W. L. Moran, *AJO* 35, 1987, 1–11; M. E. Vogelzang, *Biu Šar Dāmē*, Groningen 1988; Dalley, 203–27; Bottéro–Kramer, 527–59; B. Alster, 461–85; *TUAT* iii, 745–59.

¹² Formerly read as Zu, the AN sign being taken as the divine determinative.

¹³ The Akkadian text was last edited by R. Campbell Thompson in 1930, but many additional fragments have been published since then (cf. Hecker, 26–30); a new edition by A. R. George is awaited. Chirhuber (1977) is a useful anthology of secondary literature. A work of especial importance is Tigay (1982).

¹⁴ See W. G. Lambert in Garelli, 39–41.

I. Gilgamesh's overbearing behaviour as king of Uruk leads the gods to create a counter to him: a man of the wild, Enkidu. The news comes to Gilgamesh, who sends a prostitute, Shamhat, to seduce the savage and bring him to town.

II. Enkidu comes. He wrestles with Gilgamesh, who realizes that he has met his match. The two become firm friends. Gilgamesh announces his intention to journey to the faraway Cedar Forest to fight its guardian, the monstrous Humbaba.

III. It is agreed that Enkidu will accompany him.

IV. The journey.

V. They arrive, kill Humbaba, and return with his head.

VI. The goddess Ishtar, impressed by Gilgamesh's handsome figure, offers herself as his lover, but he rejects her. Furious, she goes up to heaven and demands from her father Anu that he send the Bull of Heaven. It causes havoc in Uruk. Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill it.

VII. The gods decide that one of the two must die. The choice falls upon Enkidu, and he wastes away.

VIII. Gilgamesh laments him at length and sees to his funeral.

IX. Troubled by the problem of death, Gilgamesh decides to journey to see Ut-napishtim, the survivor of the Flood,¹⁵ to whom the gods granted eternal life at the ends of the earth. He reaches Mt. Mashu, from where the sun comes forth, and persuades its guardians, a Scorpion-man and his wife, to let him pass through the immensely long, pitch-dark tunnel that leads to the far side. He emerges in a shining garden of precious stones.

X. He finds an isolated tavern and asks the alewife, Siduri, for directions on how to cross the sea to Ut-napishtim. The ferryman Ur-shanabi is induced to take him over the 'waters of death'.

XI. Gilgamesh asks Ut-napishtim how he obtained eternal life. Ut-napishtim relates the story of the Flood. As for Gilgamesh, if he wants immortality, he must first remain awake for a week. Gilgamesh immediately fails the test and falls *asleep* for a week. He sets off to return home. Ut-napishtim generously shows him where to dive to get an underwater plant which restores youth. But on the way back a snake steals it from him. He returns to Uruk, having realized that his journey was in vain.

The end of Tablet XI rounds off the composition by harking back to the prologue of Tablet I—a prologue which was absent from the Old Babylonian version and was perhaps the work of Sin-leqe-unninni. Tablet XII is a subsequent addition, and makes a strikingly bad fit with

¹⁵ He is identical with Atrahasis.

the text. It is in fact an adaptation of the latter part of the Sumerian poem *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World*. It begins abruptly in the middle of the story, with no attempt to link it or reconcile it with what has gone before, and it gives a quite different account of Enkidu's death. His ghost returns through a hole in the earth and describes to Gilgamesh the horrors of the underworld.¹⁶

Two poems are first attested on fourteenth-century tablets from Amarna in Upper Egypt. These are *Adapa* and *Nergal and Ereshkigal*. *Adapa*,¹⁷ at least, may have been an Old Babylonian composition; an Sumerian version is rumoured to exist. It is a short poem, containing another myth of man's failure to win immortality. Adapa, an ancient sage of Eridu, is summoned to heaven after disabling the South Wind. There he is offered the bread and water of life. But Ea has warned him to expect the bread and water of death, so he declines it.

*Nergal and Ereshkigal*¹⁸ tells a humorous story. Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld, cannot go up to heaven to join the gods' feast, so she sends her minister to fetch her share. Nergal fails to show the minimum proper respect, and this leads to some tense diplomacy. In the end Nergal goes down to Ereshkigal and grabs her by the hair, after which they make love and he opts to remain as her consort.

Another poem involving Ereshkigal is the *Descent of Ishtar*, which is based on a Sumerian original.¹⁹ Ishtar decides to visit the land of the dead. She passes through seven gates, at each one of which she has to divest herself of an ornament or a garment, until at last she arrives naked before Ereshkigal and falls lifeless. Sexual activity in the upper world ceases in her absence. Ea devises a stratagem to get her released. But she has to promise her lover Dumuzi to Ereshkigal as a substitute for herself. This is why he periodically dies and is ritually lamented.

The poem still known (as in antiquity) by its incipit *Enūma eliš*, 'When on high', or alternatively as the *Epic of Creation*, is a substantial composition of the Middle Babylonian period: 1,092 verses in seven

¹⁶ It has been suggested that Tablet XII was added by Nabu-zuqup-kena, a cleric of about 700 B.C. whose name appears in a scribal colophon (F. M. T. de Liagre Böhl in Oberhuber, 260 f., 273), but this is quite uncertain. For the Sumerian poem see Shaffer (1963).

¹⁷ S. A. Picchioni, *Il poemetto di Adapa*, Budapest 1981; Dalley, 182–8 (omits a portion of the text, fragment D); Foster, 429–34.

¹⁸ J. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* i, Leipzig 1915, 968–74; O. R. Gurney, *An. Stud.* 10, 1960, 105–31; H. Hunger, *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk* i, Berlin 1976; Dalley, 163–81; Bottéro-Kramer, 437–64; Foster, 410–28; *TUAT* iii, 766–80.

¹⁹ R. Borger, *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke*, 2nd ed., Rome 1979, i, 95–104, 143–4, ii, 110–3; E. Ebeling, *Orientalia* 18, 1949, 30–7; Dalley, 154–62; Bottéro-Kramer, 318–30; Foster, 411–9, *TUAT* iii, 760–6. For the Sumerian poem see W. R. Stadel, *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*, Diss. Baltimore 1974; Jacobsen, 205–32; Bottéro-Kramer, 276–95 (another version, *ibid.* 295–300); *TUAT* iii, 458–506.

tablets, almost completely preserved.²⁰ Its narrative starts from the beginning of the world, but its main theme is the conflict between the chief god of Babylon, Marduk (replaced by Aššur in an Assyrian recension), and the personified Sea, Tiamat. He defeats her and her monstrous supporters, fashions heaven and earth out of her bisected body, appoints stations for the gods, organizes the world, creates mankind, and finally builds Babylon with all its divine sanctuaries. The last two hundred lines are occupied by a hymnic recital of Marduk's fifty titles and by an epilogue. The poem was recited in the course of the New Year festival at Babylon and on the fourth day of other months elsewhere. Priestly writers giving learned explanations of ritual procedures regularly cite it as an authoritative text.

The latest of the canonical mythical poems is *Erra and Ishum*, composed by Kabti-ilani-Marduk, perhaps in the ninth or the first half of the eighth century.²¹ It consisted of some 720 long lines in five tablets. Although it is narrative in outer form, there is little definite event; the poem is composed predominantly of speeches by Erra, the god of war and destruction, his attendant Ishum, and other gods. Erra is bent on devastation, and a terrifying picture of his grim proclivities is conveyed. There is a political sub-text: Marduk is not in his place, Babylon is weak and unstable and at Erra's mercy, all nations are at war; but a man of Akkad will rise up and take command of them all, and Babylonia's battered fortunes will be restored.

Historical epic

The existence of 'historical' epic in Mesopotamia is much less well known outside Assyriological circles (if it is known at all) than that of the mythological poems. The term 'historical epic' in this context is sanctioned by convention, but both words need qualification. By 'historical' we do not mean that the composition is necessarily free from mythical elements, romanticization, or other distortion of historical fact,

²⁰ R. Labat, *Le poème babylonien de la création*, Paris 1935 (outdated); W. G. Lambert and S. B. Parker, *Enūma eliš*, Oxford 1966 (cuneiform only, no apparatus); Dalley, 228–77; Bottéro–Kramer 602–79; Foster, 351–402; *TUAT* iii. 565–602. The last two include an important new piece of Tablet II published by F. N. H. Al-Rawi and A. R. George, *Iraq* 52, 1990, 149–57. The same scholars have published a new witness to Tablet VI in *JCS* 46, 1994, 131–9. On the dating of the poem see esp. W. Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982, 174–81.

²¹ L. Cagni, *L'épopée d'Erra*, Rome 1969; id., *The Poem of Erra* (Sources from the Ancient Near East, 1. 3), Malibu 1977; H. W. F. Saggs, *Afo* 33, 1986, 29; F. N. H. Al-Rawi and J. A. Black, *Iraq* 51, 1989, 111–22; Dalley, 282–315; Bottéro–Kramer, 680–727; Foster, 771–805; *TUAT* iii. 781–801. As to the dating, W. G. Lambert has argued for the reign of Nabu-apla-iddina (885–852) (*Afo* 18, 1957/8, 396–8; similarly Bottéro–Kramer, 720); W. von Soden, *UF* 3, 1971, 255 f., seeks to narrow it down to 764 BC, and adds further arguments for an eighth-century dating in *Afo* 34, 1987, 67–9.

but simply that it is concerned with relationships between historical kings and with human affairs in a particular historical, political, and geographical setting. By 'epic' we mean poetry that is predominantly narrative, though at the beginning or the end it may sometimes be rather hymnic in style, celebrating the king who is the hero of the poem with a recital of his titles or accomplishments. These poems are not of great length. The longest of which we have knowledge was probably between 900 and 1000 lines long, only a fraction of the length of the *Gilgamesh* epic; others had between 100 and 200 lines, and one or two had well under a hundred.

There was a Sumerian tradition of epics about certain kings of the Third Dynasty of Uruk: Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and Gilgamesh. They would have lived sometime in the first half of the third millennium. The most important of the poems are known as *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, the *Lugalbanda Epic*, and *Gilgamesh and Agga*.²² The first two of these relate to a conflict between Enmerkar and the king of a distant city called Aratta in the eastern mountain lands, a source of building stone and precious minerals. *Gilgamesh and Agga* concerns a dispute between the two Sumerian cities of Uruk and Kish. This is the most realistic of the three epics. Whatever historical episode may underlie the other two has rather obviously been overlaid with mythical and folktale elements.

The extant copies were written in the first half of the second millennium, but the compositions may go back to the Third Dynasty of Uruk, perhaps specifically to the reign of Shulgi, when there is evidence for a strong interest in the heroic past. Shulgi called Gilgamesh his 'brother', and claimed the same divine parentage. He himself was the subject of large quantities of praise poetry of the genus known as the royal hymn, which flourished in the Neo-Sumerian and Old Babylonian periods. These court compositions sometimes contained passages of narrative about some exploit of the king's, and one of the Shulgi hymns in particular has an extended section on his punitive campaign against the Gutians which gives the poem something of the character of an epic.²³ Similarly under the Larsa Dynasty, a century and a half later, we find a hymn that contains not only prayers for King Gungunum but also a narrative section referring to his expedition against the Didnu nomads.²⁴

²² Translated by Jacobson, 275–355; *TUAT* iii. 507–39, 549–59; cf. S. Cohen, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, Diss. Univ. Pennsylvania 1973; C. Wilcke, *Das Lugalbandaepos*, Wiesbaden 1989; W. H. P. Römer, *Das sumerische Kurzepos 'Gilgamesh und Agga'* (*AOAT* 209/1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980.

²³ Shulgi D, edited by J. Klein, *Three Shulgi Hymns*, Bar-Ilan 1981. In *CANE* ii. 851 Klein actually calls the poem a 'hymnal epic'.

²⁴ J. van Dijk, *Texts in the Iraq Museum*, 9, 41; cf. V. Hurowitz and J. G. Westenholz, *JCS* 42,

The spectacular conquests of Sargon of Akkad, which brought Sumer for the first time under Semitic suzerainty and established an empire that extended (briefly) from the Gulf to the Mediterranean coast, made a natural heroic age for later Akkadian poets to look back to. At least one epic about Sargon was current in the second millennium. There are two texts dating from the Old Babylonian period; they may be different parts or versions of the same poem. In the more extensive one²⁵—portions of the last 124 lines survive—an expedition against the land of Uta-rapashtim (unidentified) is narrated. Long rhetorical speeches and perhaps a short catalogue of contingents precede a very summary narration of Sargon's journey and annihilating victory. In an epilogue, placed in his mouth, he recites the list of all the distant lands he has conquered, ending with a challenge to kings of the future:

Sargon notifies his descendants (of all this).
Come on, then: the king who will equal me
must make all the travels that I made.

The other fragment²⁶ yields parts of 82 lines. Again speeches predominate. After leading his army across the Amanus mountains to the cedar forests, Sargon announces that he plans to march against Mardaman, a country in the upper Tigris region. Presently the conquest of a town and the taking of booty are narrated; after that another expedition through dark woods, and a further victory.

Sargon is referred to in this text by the formula *šar tamhārim*, 'the war-lord', and this was the title (presumably the incipit) of an epic about him that enjoyed a wide circulation in the Middle Babylonian period and subsequently. A substantial piece of it, about 116 verses, survives on a tablet from Amarna, dating from about 1400 BC, and there are also fragments of a Hittite version which must be nearly as old, besides Neo-Assyrian fragments showing that the work continued to be copied for many centuries.²⁷ In all probability it went back to the Old Babylonian

period, and there is a good chance that one or both of the Old Babylonian fragments belong to it, or to a recension of it.

The Amarna fragment contains a dramatic account of how some Akkadian merchants, who have somehow been mistreated by Nur-Daggal (more correctly Nur-Dagan), the king of Buršahanda in central Anatolia, prevail upon Sargon, against the disinclination of his weary troops, to undertake the long and difficult journey and bring the offender to heel. Nur-Daggal and his men are boasting of their security from attack, when Sargon suddenly appears and, in a trice, conquers them. The conclusion of the campaign at the end of the tablet is followed by the subscription 'first tablet of *šar tamhāri*, complete'. The Hittite version continues beyond this point. Sargon remains for three years at Buršahanda. After his departure his troops decide to destroy the city's wall and gate—but there the text breaks off.

Another poem focussed on Sargon's grandson Naram-Sin. A fragment of Old Babylonian date contains part of an account of his expedition against Rish-Adad, the king of Apishal (location unknown).²⁸ On the obverse we find again the motif of the march through difficult mountain terrain. On the reverse an envoy from Apishal is trying to appease the Akkadian king's wrath with a message of submission.

These poems on Sargon and his grandson, which were not the only type of literature that grew up about them,²⁹ first appear in writing a good four or five centuries after their lifetime. At about the same period, in the eighteenth century, we encounter an epic (if it was an epic rather than a royal hymn) composed in celebration of a living king, namely Zimri-Lim, the last independent ruler of Mari before its conquest by Hammurabi. The text is as yet unpublished, apart from a few short passages that have been quoted in published work,³⁰ but we gather that it was 166 lines in length and concerned a successful campaign towards the north.

With the doubtful exception of the Amarna fragment mentioned in note 27 above, no further traces of historical epics appear for another half millennium. A revival or new development of the genre seems to take

1990, 44.

²⁵ J. Nougayrol, *RA* 45, 1951, 169–83; Foster, 100–5.

²⁶ J. van Dijk, *Sumer* 13, 1957, 66 and 99–105, and *Texts in the Iraq Museum*, 9 no. 48 (cuneiform text only); Foster, loc. cit. Joan Westenholz is to edit it under the title 'Sargon in Foreign Lands'.

²⁷ A. F. Rainey, *AOAT* 8, 1970, 6–11 (Amarna); H. G. Güterbock, *MDOG* 101, 1969, 14–26 (Hittite); W. G. Lambert, *AJO* 20, 1963, 161–2 (Neo-Assyrian; other Neo-Assyrian fragments in KAV 138 (matching a passage in the Amarna text) and CT 22. 48); Foster, 250–6. Another epic fragment from Amarna (*EA* 358), with a dialogue between a king and his scribe Amallu, might belong to *šar tamhāri*; or it may concern some second-millennium ruler. It is probably due to the influence of the epic that Rib-Haddu the king of Byblos, writing to the Egyptian pharaoh in the fourteenth century, applies the title *šar tamhāri* to him (*EA* 74, n. 1; Moran, 143 n. 2).

²⁸ H. G. Güterbock, *AJO* 13, 1939–41, 46–8; Foster, 106–8.

²⁹ In the first place there were inscriptions set up by these kings themselves or their successors and sometimes reproduced in later copies. Then there is the so-called *narr* literature, in which the king is made to relate his achievements as if on a stela, and the literary chronicle. See H. Hirsch, *AJO* 20, 1963, 1–9; B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, Cambridge Mass. 1980, esp. the survey of Sargon texts on pp. 125–47.

³⁰ D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, *MARI* 4, 1985, 325, 332, and *ARM* 26.1, 1988, 393 and 428; P. Marengo in *Florilegium Marianum. Recueil d'études en l'honneur de Michel Fleury*, Paris 1992, 121 f.; J.-M. Durand, *MARI* 7, 1993, 51.

place at about the end of the fourteenth century, in both Babylonia and Assyria, and to last for a couple of hundred years, sustained in part by the struggles between the two countries. Fragments survive from some eight or ten compositions of this period.

Firstly, the compiler of the historical work known as Chronicle P, when he comes to the reign of the Kassite king Kurigalzu II (1322–1298), incorporates a verse narrative containing some speeches. It covers, very perfunctorily, a series of victories on different fronts, and reads in fact more like a versified chronicle, with touches of epic stylization, than an epic of the regular sort.³¹

The first of the Assyrian epics celebrated Adad-nerari I (1295–1264) and his war with Kurigalzu's son Nazi-Maruttaš. We have some lines from the opening of the poem, where Adad-nerari's titles are listed, and he then initiates the narrative in the first person, 'When Ishtar sent defeat upon me ...'. In another piece the two kings send each other hostile messages. The Assyrian appears to accuse the Kassite of breaking treaty oaths.³² In one copy, at least, the work extended over more than one tablet.

The conflict between Assyria and Babylonia had begun before Adad-nerari's reign, and it rumbled on for about a century until, around 1215, Tukulti-Ninurta I decisively defeated the Kassite Kaštiliaš IV, sacked Babylon, and carried off the statue of Marduk, the city's god. The triumph was commemorated, appropriately, in the grandest (as it appears to us from what survives) of all the Mesopotamian historical epics, which must have been composed before 1208. As in the case of the Adad-nerari epic, fragments come from two sites, Aššur and Nineveh, and from both the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods. Parts of 529 lines are extant, and it has been calculated that there were originally at least 810.³³

The poem began with an encomium of Tukulti-Ninurta and a contrasting picture of the evil Kaštiliaš, who has so angered the gods by his treaty-breaking that they abandon their traditional Babylonian cities and sanctuaries. The narrative proceeds with the arrest on Assyrian territory of some merchants who are engaged on a secret mission for the Kassite king, probably taking money to some potential ally in the north. Tukulti-Ninurta protests to Shamash, the sun-god who supervises justice,

³¹ Grayson (1975a), 173–5. Two other small epic fragments, containing mentions of persons who may be identical with known Babylonians of about Kurigalzu's time, may come from another poem or poems of that period (*BWL* 296 f.; Grayson (1975b), 47–55).

³² R. Borger, *AfO* 17, 1954–6, 369; E. Weidner, *AfO* 20, 1963, 113–15; P. B. Machinist, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38, 1976, 455–82; id. (1978), 141, 495; C. Wilcke, *ZA* 67, 1977, 187–91; Foster, 204–5.

³³ Machinist (1978); Foster, 209–29.

about the Kassites' contempt for a treaty made by 'our fathers', and calls for their destruction. As in the Adad-nerari epic, there is a sequence of aggressive messages exchanged between the two rulers. Then preparations are made for war. Kaštiliaš becomes afraid, and reflects at length on his guilt; he is getting only bad dreams and omens, and he knows he has alienated the gods. At Tukulti-Ninurta's first onslaught he takes flight. For some time he is able to avoid battle and capture. But after a further exchange of messages an engagement takes place, and the Kassite forces are routed. Tukulti-Ninurta's troops praise his great might and call for a final, decisive battle. The lines are drawn up. A powerful gang of gods—Aššur, Enlil, Anu, Sin, Adad, Shamash, Ninurta, Ishtar—march at the head of the Assyrian army and bring their various weapons to bear on the foe. Behind them comes the king, who kills a man with his first arrow. His forces fall upon the enemy, and the battle is enveloped in a dust-storm. Victory is achieved. In the last column of the main tablet the booty taken from Babylon is described, loaded into boats for transport home, and it is related how Tukulti-Ninurta adorned his sanctuaries with gold. The poem as a whole has a certain lack of subtlety, but a truly epic sweep.

The Assyrians had lost control of Babylon again by the time Adad-nirari-ušur came to its throne in 1206. A poetic narrative about him appears on a late Babylonian tablet.³⁴ It describes, for once, not the king's defeat of a foreign foe but his survival of a local rebellion. He finds it necessary to confess certain misdeeds before Marduk. But his sacrifices appease the gods, and in further expiation he undertakes a programme of building improvements and adornment of shrines in several cities. He rewards with governorships certain people who were loyal to him in the crisis. It looks as if this poem at least, whatever may be the case with the other royal epics, was not composed primarily for the king's gratification.

In the mid twelfth century Babylonia suffered severe depredations from the Elamites to the east. In 1158 the Elamite king Šutruk-Nahhunte deposed the Kassite king Zababa-šuma-iddina and set his own son Kutur-Nahhunte in his place. The statue of Marduk was once again deported. Some eighty lines from an epic account of these disasters are preserved on a late Babylonian tablet.³⁵ Presumably the poet went on to record how the sacrilegious foreigners were eventually punished. But that did not come about until Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104), who

³⁴ Grayson (1975b), 56–77.

³⁵ A. Jeremias, *MVAG* 21, 1916, 84–93; Foster, 285–7.

defeated Elam and retrieved Marduk. So the fragment may belong to a Nebuchadnezzar epic.

If so, it was not the only poem on the subject, for we possess the opening of another, which begins with the picture of Nebuchadnezzar sitting in Babylon, raging like a lion, asking Marduk how long the god proposes to go on dwelling in the enemy's land, and entreating him to return to his Babylonian temple Esagila. Marduk answers from out of the sky, telling Nebuchadnezzar to bring him home from Elam and promising him victory over that country.³⁶

Two other epic fragments of uncertain date, very alike in character, describe attacks on Babylonian cities. One of them is concerned with a siege of Uruk. It relates how the citizens were reduced to despair, and the city's protecting gods abandoned it. After the siege had lasted three years, Enlil spoke to Ishtar, mentioning his devotion to Uruk, Nippur, Borsippa, and Babylon.³⁷ The other fragment, on a sixth-century tablet, describes in vivid terms a massacre in Ur, again with the gods departing *en masse*, while the nobles Enki-ušum and Sin-abu-ilani-ereš flee to the mountains.³⁸

A curious miniature epic, only 31 lines in length, survives on a Middle Assyrian student's tablet.³⁹ Its peculiarity is that the hero and the enemy on whom he makes war are identified only as the Hunter and the Asses, or the Highland Cattle, though it is clear that they stand for an Assyrian king and a people dwelling in the mountains. E. Ebeling cleverly suggested that the subject was the campaign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) against Murattāš, this foreign place-name being facetiously interpreted as Akkadian *mūr atānī*, 'donkey foals'. In its structure and its use of traditional motifs the little poem is quite conventional.

Another fragment of 57 lines comes from a poem relating Tiglath-pileser's victories against a confederation of northerners, Qumanians, Musrians, Gutians, and men of Habhu.⁴⁰ These peoples have been stirring troublously, but the gods pronounce that they are to be slaughtered, and lead Tiglath-pileser triumphantly to battle. He destroys their towns and sanctuaries, their crops and orchards, terrorizing them and bringing about their complete submission. Comparison with the royal annals suggests that the poet has run together separate episodes

from Tiglath-pileser's fifth campaign, inflated the enemy alliance so as to give the impression of a vast region in turmoil, and made the enemy the ~~opponent~~ instead of the Assyrian king himself.⁴¹

After Tiglath-pileser's time the Assyrian expansion lost impetus, and there is a dearth of epic material until Assurnasirpal II (883–858), whose campaign to Lebanon and Carchemish is the subject of a short poem that has so far been published in cuneiform only.⁴² Another short poem, of some 65 lines, celebrates a campaign of Assurnasirpal's successor, Shalmaneser III (858–824), to Urartu in the Armenian highlands.⁴³ In its latter part the narrative switches from the third to the first person, as in the Old Babylonian Sargon epic. This feature may perhaps be accounted for by the influence of *narā* literature, though it is also very typical of Sumerian royal praise poetry.⁴⁴

There is another gap of a little over a century before we come to another period in which epic composition is seen to be practised at all regularly. One small fragment appears to come from a poem about Sargon II (721–705) and a campaign in Elam.⁴⁵ Several others relate to the reign of Assurbanipal (668–627), again with particular reference to Elam.⁴⁶ It is not clear whether more than one epic is represented. One of the fragments is an obvious ending, with blessings on the king and prayers for the indefinite prolongation of his reign. If the pieces do belong to one poem, it must have been of some length, with a good deal of episodic detail.

The tradition continued under the Chaldaean kings of the Neo-Babylonian period. Indeed, the first of them, Nabopolassar, had his initial triumph in seizing power (626 BC) celebrated in a short epic poem; it described the bloody struggle and then the new king's coronation.⁴⁷ A somewhat later fragment mentions Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562) and Amel-Marduk (561–560). It is by no means flattering to the latter monarch, and may have been composed under one of his successors, such as Nabonidus (555–539).

In the foregoing pages we have seen how a tradition of historical epic about kings of the past, or more often the present, persisted from the

³⁶ H. Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 1, 1893–7, 542 f. (CT 13. 48); cf. H. Zimmern, *Der alte Orient* 7(3), 1905, 7 f.; Grayson (1975b), 42 f.; Foster, 301.

³⁷ P. Jensen, *Keilschriftliche Bibliothek* 6/1, 1901, 272–3; R. Campbell Thompson, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Oxford 1930, 91–2, pl. 59.

³⁸ LKU 43.

³⁹ E. Ebeling, *Orientalia* 18, 1949, 30–9 (LKA 62); V. Hurowitz and J. G. Westenholz, *JCS* 42, 1990, 46–9; Foster, 248–9.

⁴⁰ Hurowitz and Westenholz, *JCS* 42, 1990, 1–45 (LKA 63); Foster, 236–8.

⁴¹ Hurowitz and Westenholz, *op. cit.*, 24–6. A further epic fragment that may come from this period mentions hostilities with the Ahlamu, an Amorite tribe with whom Tiglath-pileser I engaged separately: CPLM 120 no. 50 (STT 366); cf. E. Reiner, *JNES* 26, 1967, 197.

⁴² LKA 64, apparently complete in 36 lines (= 22 verses?).

⁴³ W. G. Lambert, *An. Sud.* 11, 1961, 143 ff.; CPLM 44–7 no. 17 (STT 43); Foster, 699–702.

⁴⁴ J. A. Black, *AJO* 29, 1983, 110–13. For *narā* literature see above, n. 29.

⁴⁵ CPLM 47–8 no. 18.

⁴⁶ CPLM 48–53, nos. 19–22 and 24; perhaps also texts in T. Bauer, *Das Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*, Leipzig 1933, ii. 72–9 (K 5272+8466, 2524, 4443, 7673, 13731).

⁴⁷ Grayson (1975b), 78–86. Another late fragment (*ibid.* 93–7) possibly belongs with the Nabopolassar piece.

second half of the third millennium to almost the middle of the first, sometimes dormant but, with the maintenance of a written transmission if not an oral one, continuous and, to a greater degree than might have been expected, homogeneous, with similar motifs recurring across the centuries. Detailed comparisons with Homeric epic will follow later. But let the characteristics of the Mesopotamian genre be summarized here.

The poems, as I have said, were of no great length. They were comparable in scale to the longer Homeric Hymns rather than to the Trojan epics. Each had a particular king as its hero, and normally confined itself to one particular campaign or other successful enterprise.⁴⁸ To judge from a few cases where the beginning of a poem is preserved, the poet began by praising a god and quickly passed on to the king, or else he focussed on the king from the first line, generally devoting some verses to his praises before embarking on the narrative. Then the reason for the war was explained: either a simple decision by the king to go and fight a particular people, or some outrageous provocation by a foreign ruler. Speeches and diplomatic messages tended to occupy more space in the narrative than the eventual action. The march to a distant land through difficult mountain terrain was a favourite motif. The gods were involved in several ways: as the recipients of prayers and entreaties, as guarantors of the righteous king's victory, as escorts of his army (in the form of statues, or in person), even as wielders of weapons on the field; they abandon a city before its fall. The final clash of arms was often dispatched very briskly: there seems to have been no tradition of extended, roving-camera battle narrative in the Homeric manner. There sometimes followed a passage about the plunder taken, and the poem might end with the king adorning his holy places, offering sacrifice, or celebrating a festival, or just with emphatic declarations of his greatness.

Wisdom literature

The mythological and narrative poems about gods and men reviewed in the preceding pages will provide material for comparisons particularly in the chapters dealing with the Homeric epics and in that part of the Hesiod chapter that deals with his *Theogony*. In considering the *Works and Days*, the lyric and elegiac poets, and Aeschylus, we shall have more occasion to draw on non-narrative texts of a religious, ethical, or popular character. In the first place we must take some account of wisdom literature, hymns, and prayers.

⁴⁸ *Šar tamhāri* may have been one exception, possibly formed by editorial combination of separate poems about Sargon. Another is the untypical chronicle-poem about Kurigalzu II.

Preceptive poetry, in which a body of moral or practical instruction is represented as being delivered by a god or sage to his son or some other suitable addressee, was already current in Sumer by the middle of the third millennium. Fragments of that date have been identified as belonging to the *Instructions of Šuruppak*, a work also known from a later version of c. 1800 and from a late second-millennium fragment of an Akkadian translation.⁴⁹ Šuruppak, an antediluvian sage, instructs his son Ziusudra on what to avoid in such matters as buying an ox or ass, ploughing a field or house, disputes, theft, murder, love, rape, and perjury. He also makes many observations on life and human behaviour. The poem had about 285 lines. Other Sumerian preceptive works attested in the early second millennium include another fragmentary one containing moral and ethical admonitions,⁵⁰ and an agricultural handbook covering a year's farming operations in 109 lines. It is introduced by the words 'In days of old a farmer instructed his son', but subscribed 'The Instructions of Ninurta, the son of Enlil'.⁵¹

The tradition continued in Akkadian. A work containing instructions from Šube-amelim to his son Zurranku has been found at Ugarit and Ebla and (with a partial Hittite translation) at Hattusa.⁵² The author praises Šube-amelim's wisdom and observes that 'from his mouth come forth decisions for the future; he speaks to wretched mankind'. The son is due to go on a journey, and the father gives him advice on this and on various aspects of managing his affairs and household. The work filled something like 170 lines.

Another of similar length, found in a number of Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian copies, but perhaps composed in the Kassite period, has come to be known as the *Counsels of Wisdom*.⁵³ Here again the counsellor, whoever he is, addresses his son. His advice ranges over such topics as avoiding evil companions, improper speech, and quarrels, kindness to the needy, marriage, the temptations to which an official is exposed, piety, and honest dealings with friends. The admonitions are supported with adages and with warnings of divine wrath and other consequences of imprudent conduct.

⁴⁹ BWL 92-5; B. Alster, *The Instructions of Šuruppak*, Copenhagen 1974; id., *Studies in Hungarian Proverbs*, Copenhagen 1975; W. H. P. Römer in *TUAT* iii, 48-67.

⁵⁰ Mentioned by Kramer (1963), 224.

⁵¹ Ibid. 105-9, 340-2; A. Salonen, *Agricultura Mesopotamica*, Helsinki 1968, 202-13; M. C. Tetlow, *Sumerian Agricultural Manual* (*Aula Orientalis*, Supp. 5), Barcelona 1994. Ninurta was a god of agriculture as well as of war.

⁵² J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica* v, Paris 1968, 273-90; E. Laroche, *ibid.* 779-84; D. Arnaud, *Recherches au pays d'Astata. Emar* VU4, Paris 1987, 371-82; M. Dietrich, *UF* 23, 1991, 33-68; G. Meyjanna, *ibid.* 69-74; Foster, 332-5.

⁵³ BWL 96-106; R. D. Biggs in *ANET* 595 f.; W. von Soden in *TUAT* iii, 183-8; Foster, 328-

Fragments of other preceptive poems are known.⁵⁴ Mention may also be made of a 59-line prose text of perhaps the eighth century, known as *Advice to a Prince*.⁵⁵ It is cast in the style of omen literature, one sentence taking the form 'The king does X; the consequences are Y'. The king and his officers are warned about the bad consequences of various different ill-advised or oppressive actions, and about the anger of the gods.

Hymns

Hymns are another genre with an immensely long history. In the Sumerian hymns the object of praise might be a god, a temple, or a king. Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon of Akkad, is associated with the redaction of a corpus of temple hymns, and some of them are attested even earlier. A 24th-century Akkadian hymn text in honour of Shamash has been recovered from Ebla.

The number of hymns from later periods is considerable, and no purpose would be served by enumerating them.⁵⁶ About twenty are known from the Old Babylonian period alone. Three of these, composed for performance in the presence of particular kings, may be singled out as being of particular importance.

The so-called *Agušaya* hymn⁵⁷ was performed at a public ceremony before Hammurabi, for whose long life it contains a prayer. It celebrates the war-goddess Ishtar, also called *Agušaya*. It is divided into ten sections, each of some dozens of lines, and each followed by directions for responses, in accordance with an established Sumerian pattern. While much of the hymn is filled with praises of the goddess and statements of her qualities, it includes an extended narrative section relating how she was given her powers, and how on behalf of the gods, who were alarmed at her strength, Ea created the goddess Šaltum (Strife) to divert her energies.

For Hammurabi's successor Samsu-iluna a court poet composed a hymn to Nanaya, a goddess of similar nature to Ishtar.⁵⁸ In the preserved

⁵⁴ BWL 106–9 (cf. von Soden, loc. cit. 169), 116–17; J. Klein, *Acta Sumerologica* 12, 1990, 60 with 67 (a father's advice to his sons, recalled to them by another).

⁵⁵ BWL 110–15; von Soden, loc. cit. 170–3; Foster, 760–2.

⁵⁶ Standard anthologies are Falkenstein–von Soden (1953); Seux (1976); W. H. P. Römer and K. Hecker in *TUAT* ii(5), 1989; Foster, 65–74 and 491–689; a small selection, mostly of late hymns, in *ANET* 383–92, 573–86. On formal features of the hymn and its relation to epic cf. Hecker, 69–100.

⁵⁷ B. Gronberg, *RA* 75, 1981, 107–34; *TUAT* ii, 731–40; Bottéro–Kramer, 204–19; Foster, 78–88; cf. Hecker, 88–98.

⁵⁸ W. von Soden, *ZA* 44, 1938, 30–44; Falkenstein–von Soden, 237–9; Hecker, 86–8; *TUAT* ii, 724–6; Foster, 69–71.

other narrative elements are confined to statements of what her father bestowed on her, and what she has bestowed on Samsu-iluna. The hymn is composed in four-line strophes (as is the *Agušaya* hymn for the next part). The same is true of the hymn to Ishtar composed for Ammu-iluna, the second king of Babylon after Samsu-iluna.⁵⁹ It is complete in sixteen strophes plus a final two-line envoi. It refers to a sacrifice by Samsu-iluna of fatted oxen and stags, and assures us that Ishtar has granted him long life and empire.

No absolute division can be made between hymnic and narrative poetry, as the two elements may be combined in varying proportions. It is really only because of the great extension of the narrative content that we do not class *Anzu* as a hymn to Ningirsu/Ninurta. *Enūma eliš* clearly starts off as a narrative, but it may be said to end as a hymn, and has strophic form throughout. We have remarked on the presence of epic narrative in certain of the Sumerian royal hymns, and of hymnic features in some of the later historical epics.

A recently edited poem of Old Babylonian date about the underworld god Ningišzida seems to combine cult lamentation with explanatory mythical narrative. It started (unless, as W. G. Lambert supposes, the surviving tablet was part of a longer series) with a call to someone to grieve and lament for Ningišzida. Then the story is told of how an emissary from the underworld arrived among the gods to claim Ningišzida, who pleaded in vain for mercy, as did his wailing mother. The whole occupied some fifty or sixty lines.⁶⁰

Hymnic and admonitory poetry also shade into each other. Some Sumerian hymns contain ethical precepts, and this element appears in a bilingual hymn to Ninurta of the Kassite period.⁶¹ The outstanding example is a substantial (200-line) hymn to Shamash, perhaps a late second-millennium composition drawing on some Old Babylonian material.⁶² It seems to have no connection with cult, and unlike the Old Babylonian hymns mentioned above, it entered the literary tradition, being attested in several late copies from Nineveh and Sippar, as well as by excerpts on exercise tablets from Aššur. It opens with praises addressed to the god, and after a time these begin to focus on his treatment of wrongdoers. Then come couplets in which the rewards of the good and bad are stated without reference to Shamash. Afterwards the poet works his way back to the god's praises.

⁵⁹ P. Thureau-Dangin, *RA* 22, 1925, 172–7; *ANET* 383 (F. J. Stephens); Falkenstein–von Soden, 235–7; Seux, 39–42; Hecker, 77–86; *TUAT* ii, 721–4; Foster, 65–8.

⁶⁰ W. G. Lambert in Abusch, 289–300.

⁶¹ *BWL* 118–20; Foster, 628–9.

⁶² Falkenstein–von Soden, 240–7; *BWL* 119–38; *ANET* 387–9; Seux, 51–63; Foster, 536–44.

Other ritual and devotional poetry

The hymns described above were essentially songs of praise. Some of them were clearly performed at occasions (perhaps annual ceremonies) at which the king was present, and they may contain prayers for the king of a general nature. There were other compositions designed to accompany royal rituals in special circumstances where prayer had a larger part: coronation hymns, prayers at the outset of a military campaign, prayers on laying the foundations of a temple.⁶³ There were purification rituals at which a specialist incantation-priest sang prayers to Shamash at sunrise on the king's behalf; these are transmitted in bilingual form, and were presumably sung in Sumerian, though they are followed by Akkadian prayers for the king himself to utter.⁶⁴ There was also a wider category of prayers 'with hand raised', employed together with lustration and offerings in supplicating a god. There are bilingual examples destined for public cult, but most texts are in Akkadian only, for use either by the king (for example on the occasion of a lunar eclipse) or by some other individual. Eulogy of the god is followed by the suppliant's complaint or plea and by a stereotyped grace.⁶⁵

In the event of certain particular ills such as bad dreams and omens, sorcery, curses, or hauntings, there were specific apotropaic rituals to perform and incantations to accompany them.⁶⁶ When the diviner examined the entrails, he sang a prayer, usually to Shamash and Adad, requesting that a clear sign be given. In the case of sickness the healing goddess Gula was besought for a resolution.⁶⁷

Of more general application were the penitential prayers (sometimes, perhaps not inaptly, called psalms) designed to appease a god's anger or overcome his disaffection. These often begin with hymnic praise of the deity and proceed to an earnest but unspecific confession of faults and transgressions, whether consciously or unconsciously committed, a recital of all the misfortunes and torments afflicting the sufferer, and a plea for the god or goddess to show mercy and grant release. Many of these texts are bilinguals, and sometimes the sufferer is referred to in the third person, as if the prayer is being sung by a priest on his behalf.

⁶³ Seux, 30 f., 110–13 (= *CPLM* no. 11, Assurbanipal's coronation hymn), 489–93.

⁶⁴ Seux, 21–3, 215–34.

⁶⁵ Ebeling (1953); W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen"*, Rome 1976; *ANET* 385 f., 389 f.; Seux, 24–7, 269–346.

⁶⁶ Seux, 27 f., 349–442.

⁶⁷ Seux, 28–30, 467–85.

Sometimes it is the king himself who offers up these prayers, at a moment of national peril or personal despondency.⁶⁸

Underlying these *De profundis* poems is the faith that God has the power of deliverance even from the greatest and most agglomerated calamities. This faith is also reflected in certain religious-philosophical poems, in some of which the deliverance actually comes about. One such Sumerian poem is known; it relates at length how a young man lamented to his god and confessed his sins, and how the god heard his prayers and turned his suffering into joy.⁶⁹ The other texts are Akkadian, and in them we meet the theme of the righteous sufferer. One of them is represented by a 46-line fragment from Ugarit.⁷⁰ A recital of personal sufferings leads on to fervent praises of Marduk and his works: Marduk had cast the speaker down, but now he has raised him up again and brought him back from the jaws of death. Two further poems of this genre became canonical, being provided with scholarly commentaries and often copied. One is known after its incipit as *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* ('Let me praise the lord of wisdom'), or *Ludlul* for short; the other has come to be called the *Theodicy*.⁷¹

Ludlul was composed by (or at any rate in the person of) Shubshi-mehre-Shakkan, a high official at the court of Nazi-Maruttaš in the early thirteenth century. Its original length is assessed at 400–500 lines. It has often been dubbed the Babylonian *Job*. The speaker relates how he has been afflicted by every calamity: his gods have forsaken him, everyone from the king to his own family has turned against him, his property has been confiscated, he has been visited by every kind of disease—all this despite his blameless piety. But then in his wretchedness he received three dreams that promised deliverance. In the end Marduk freed him from all his ills. The astonished Babylonians broke out in praises of Marduk and his consort Šarpanitu.

The *Theodicy*, composed in the reign of Adad-apla-iddina (1068–1047) by a Babylonian incantation-priest named Saggil-kinam-ubbib, is an elaborate work in 27 eleven-line stanzas with an acrostic spanning the whole. It is a dialogue between two men who speak alternate stanzas. One of them is another righteous sufferer figure, thoroughly disillusioned with the gods and finding no justice in their workings; the other is a

⁶⁸ S. Langdon, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms* (*OECT* 6), Paris 1927; E. R. Dalglish, *Psalms Fifty one in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Patternism*, Leiden 1962; Maul (1988); Seux, 17–20, 110–111.

⁶⁹ S. N. Kramer in *ANET* 589–91; W. H. P. Römer in *TUAT* iii, 102–9.

⁷⁰ J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica* v, Paris 1968, 265–73, 435; W. von Soden in *TUAT* iii, 140–3; Kutscher, 326–7.

⁷¹ *BWL* 21–62 (with Addenda, 343–5); *ibid.* 63–91; *ANET* 596–604; von Soden, *TUAT* iii 110–35 and 143–57; Foster, 308–25; 806–14.

philosophic counsellor who tells the first that he is getting things out of proportion. He argues that the gods' mind is mysterious, and that it is wisest to go along with them.

Disputations

From religious poetry I turn to a genre that might loosely be called dialectical. This is the disputation, in which two animals, two trees, or some other pair of non-human rivals, debate with one another about their respective merits. The type was established in Sumerian tradition, probably as a court entertainment. The Akkadian examples include disputes between a tamarisk and a palm, a poplar and a laurel, and an ox and a horse.⁷² The first of these, at least, was a popular composition, being attested in varying forms on Old Babylonian, Middle Assyrian, and Neo-Assyrian tablets, from Babylonia to Syria, and it seems to have left echoes in a Middle Persian story called *The Assyrian Tree*.⁷³ Of rather different character is a long narrative composition called *The Fox*, which involved at least four different animals and conflicts among them.⁷⁴

Our dependence upon scribal traditions limits our access to material of a truly popular nature, non-literary material in active oral circulation. Sumerian scribes were more receptive to such material than the more academically-minded Babylonian scholars of the Kassite period. Consequently there are extensive Sumerian collections of proverbs, sayings, and random utterances. The Babylonians took over some of this as traditional copy and transmitted it in bilingual form, while not deigning to record purely Akkadian material of comparable character. That some of the same proverbs enjoyed continuing currency, however, is shown by their occasional quotation in letters or literary works.⁷⁵

Also preserved in bilingual form is what Claus Wilcke has identified as a drinking song; it has come to be known among Assyriologists as the

⁷² BWL 150–85, where these works are inappropriately assigned to the category 'fable'; ANET 592 f.; H. L. J. Vanstiphout, *Acta Sumerologica* 12, 1990, 271–318; 14, 1992, 339–67; G. J. Reinik and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East*, Leuven 1991, TUAT iii, 184–7.

⁷³ See BWL 154, and for the Syrian fragments (from Emar, thirteenth century) C. Wilcke, ZA 79, 1989, 161–90.

⁷⁴ BWL 186–209; Vanstiphout, *Acta Sumerologica* 10, 1988, 191–227; TUAT iii, 181–4. One Ibmī-Marduk is recorded as the author.

⁷⁵ See E. I. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs*, Philadelphia 1959; BWL 222–82; J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica* v, 291–300; B. Alster, *The Instructions of Šuruppak*, 166 f., and *Studies in Sumerian Proverbs*, id., JCS 27, 1975, 201–30, and RA 72, 1978, 97–112, and *Assyriological Miscellanies* I, 1980, 33–50; R. S. Falkowitz, *The Sumerian Rhetoric Collections*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1984; id. in *La Fable* (Fondation Hardt Entretiens, 30), Vandœuvres 1984, 1–32; ANET 593 f.; W. H. P. Römer in TUAT iii, 18–46; Foster, 337–48.

'Hallude des héros du temps jadis'.⁷⁶ It is found in Old and Middle Babylonian tablets from Sippar, Ugarit, and Emar. Or rather, what is found there consists of a collection of verses and verse sequences that appear in a different selection and a different order in each copy. The sentiments expressed concern the vanity of human ambitions, the brevity of life, the famous kings and heroes of legend—where are they now?—and the moral that we should chase away sorrow and honour the goddess of beer. It seems to be a sort of Sumerian Omar Khayyam that scribes learned at school, sang in their cups (as German students used to sing Latin songs), and wrote down sporadically from memory; as there had been no strong logical thread in the first place, it was natural that the constituents should rearrange themselves freely.

A rare Akkadian compilation of epigrams, anecdotes, and sayings, many of them about animals, is preserved on an Assyrian tablet dated to 716 BC and on fragments of others from Assurbanipal's library.⁷⁷ The language is late, and the material is evidently not drawn from ancient verbal tradition but from oral currency.

Royal inscriptions

Mesopotamia has little to offer in the way of literary prose. There are countless letters and administrative documents; there are law-codes; there is an abundant technical literature of lexical lists, omens, spells, and so on. I shall seldom have occasion to refer to any of these. The one genre that will concern us to some extent is the royal inscription.

Since before 2500 kings had erected inscriptions to record their building activities, dedications, and other matters which they wished to be remembered. From the time of Adad-nerari I (1295–1264) Assyrian kings began to set up what are often called 'annals', giving their account of a military campaign, or of several campaigns in chronological order, with mention of their other activities thrown in. Over the centuries these documents, composed for the king by scribes who made much use of earlier models, tended to become longer and more rhetorical in character, with the use of similes and other literary devices. This development reached its height under Sargon II (721–705) and Sennacherib (704–681). Texts of particular note include a lengthy account of Sargon's eighth campaign against Urartu in 714, addressed to the god Aššur and to the people of the city of Aššur, to whom it was no doubt read; the final

⁷⁶ C. Wilcke in J. von Ungern-Sternberg and H. Reinau (edd.), *Vergangenheit in mündlicher Überlieferung* (Colloquium Rauricum, I), Stuttgart 1988, 137–9; W. G. Lambert in J. Day et al. (edd.), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel. Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerson*, Cambridge 1995, 37–42, with references to other publications.

⁷⁷ BWL 213–20; TUAT iii, 187 f.

edition of Sennacherib's Annals (689), which contains a particularly expansive and dramatic description of the Battle of Halule in 691; and the lengthy Annals of Assurbanipal (668–627).⁷⁸

UGARITIC

In 1929 French archaeologists began to investigate the tell of Ras Shamra on the north Syrian coast, seven miles north of Latakia (the ancient Laodicea), just at the closest point to Cyprus. The mound, situated half a mile from the sea and extending over 55 acres, proved to conceal the remains of successive cities that flourished between about 7000 and 1180 BC. It was soon established that this was the place known in the Bronze Age as Ugarit, famed for the wealth and splendour of its royal palace, which itself turned out to cover two and a half acres.

Ugarit was a major entrepôt, with active connections to the Phoenician cities and Egypt in the south, the Hittite empire in the north, Assyria in the east, Cyprus and the Mycenaean world in the west. Several thousand clay tablets, dating from the fifteenth to the beginning of the twelfth century, have been recovered from archives in the palace, the temple of Baal, and other buildings both public and private. They are written in three different scripts and five or six different languages: Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, Hittite, whatever language is concealed in the Cypro-Minoan script, and the previously unattested local tongue, Ugaritic. This last, expressed in an alphabet imitating cuneiform signs, was quickly deciphered and found to be a West Semitic language, similar to Phoenician, Hebrew, and Moabite, though at an earlier stage of development.

The tablets written in Ugaritic include literary works, lists of deities, ritual texts, letters, inventories, economic and administrative documents, and hippiatric prescriptions. The literary works consist mainly of mythological narrative poems, some of them of considerable length and fully worthy of the title 'epic'. They are in an imperfect state of preservation, with many gaps and damaged portions even in the most complete tablets. And it has to be acknowledged that the interpretation of many passages is more or less uncertain. This is partly because the meanings of many words have to be guessed on the basis of similar-

⁷⁸ For these see Thureau-Dangin (1912); Luckenbill (1924); Streck (1916); translations in D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, ii, Chicago 1927; selections in *ANET*. Royal inscriptions of earlier periods are covered in *RIMA*, *RIMB*, and *RIME*. On the genre see A. K. Grayson, *Orientalia* 49, 1980, 149–71; J. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, New Haven & London 1983, 60–8; D. O. Edzard and J. Renger in *RIA* vi, 59–77.

looking roots in Hebrew, Arabic, or other Semitic languages, which often offer more than one possible solution. Thus, where one expert translates '(To) the womb I'll descend. When I'm reborn', another renders 'Alone I shall go down into the grave of us both', and a third, 'I have to get out of my underwear alone'.⁷⁹ The Ugaritic writing system, which does not mark vowels (except in association with aleph) or doubled consonants, itself makes for much ambiguity. Distinctions of case, person, number, and voice are often concealed. The particles written *l*, *al*, and *bi* may all apparently stand for either 'not' or 'certainly'. Word division (though not sentence or verse division) is marked in principle, but the divider is a small stroke that can easily disappear, leaving us to decide between (for example) *ar b dd* 'much love' and *ar bdd* 'honey from a pot'; or turning *bn hrm* 'between the hills' into *bn hrm* 'in the rivers'. Other ambiguities are inherent in the grammar of the language. The so-called imperfect tense (really an active as opposed to a stative aspect) may refer to past, present, or future, which, combined with the orthographic confluence of persons, etc., may make it entirely unclear whether a sequence of lines belongs to narrative or speech. Fortunately there are long stretches where the sense is reasonably clear and agreed.

Most of the poetic texts come from a series copied by one man, Ilmilku the Shubanite, in the time of King Niqmaddu (assumed to be Niqmaddu II, who reigned in the second half of the fourteenth century), and conserved in the high priest's manse near the temple of Baal. The poems all have a religious or theological dimension. Some of them are set entirely in the world of the gods, telling about conflicts between one god and another, or about other of their doings that were, we presume, held to be relevant to the existing world order. Other poems have human heroes, but gods still play important roles in them.

Narrative poems about gods

The poems of the first category are concerned predominantly with the god who enjoyed the highest status at Ugarit, Baal (Ba'lu). 'Baal' is basically a title meaning 'lord' or 'master', and many different Baalim, often qualified by the attachment of a place-name, were worshipped up and down Canaan and in other Semitic-speaking areas; the Old Testament is full of hostile references to them. But the Ugaritic Baal was an alias of the storm-god Hadad. He had his seat on the mountain Šapan, which seems to have been identified at one time with Mt. Hermon but

⁷⁹ Gordon, Gibson, and de Moor at *KTU* 1. 2 iii 20.

later with Mt. Hazzi, that is, the Djebel el Aqra', which dominates Ugarit's northern horizon.⁸⁰

First in importance are six tablets written by Ilmilku, each containing four, six, or eight columns of text.⁸¹ At least four of these tablets represent segments of a single continuous poem, and it may well be that all six do. Scholars sometimes speak of a Baal cycle; but we should probably speak rather of a grand Baal epic of between two and three thousand verses, in which several episodes of Baal's mythical career were related in sequence. One tablet of which the beginning is preserved (*KTU* 1. 6) bears the heading *l-B' l*, '(belonging) to Baal', indicating that it had its place in a Baal series.⁸²

The tablets *KTU* 1. 1 and 2 are concerned with the rise and fall of Yammu, the deified Sea.⁸³ El, the gods' aged president, confers power on Yammu and apparently urges him to unseat Baal, who will otherwise overcome him. The craftsman god Kothar is summoned to build Yammu a palace. Yammu sends his envoys to the assembly of the gods to demand the surrender of Baal, who resists. Later Baal fights with Yammu. At first Yammu has the upper hand, but after Kothar provides Baal with two special throwing-clubs, the latter is victorious, and set to become king of the gods. The story seems to refer to the storm-god's taming of the tempestuous seas of winter. In other allusions to the defeat of Yammu in subsequent tablets, it is associated with the slaying of a seven-headed serpent or dragon, and with a victory over 'Ltn', who is evidently the same as the biblical Leviathan.⁸⁴

Tablets 3–6 are the four which certainly constitute a continuous series. There are two main parts to the narrative. Tablet 3 and most of 4 are concerned with Baal's need for a palace of his own, the measures taken to secure the consent of El and of his marine consort Athirat, and the eventual building of the palace by Kothar. Once installed, Baal calls

⁸⁰ Caquot–Sznycer, 80–3; Margalit, 474.

⁸¹ *KTU* 1. 1–6. The first numeral in references from *KTU*, by which all Ugaritic texts are cited, signifies the category of text, '1' being the number assigned to the literary and religious texts. The soundest translations are those of Caquot–Sznycer–Herdner (with extensive philological notes); J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Edinburgh 1978; G. Del Olmo Lete, *Mitos y leyendas de Canaan*, Madrid 1981. But these frequently offer very different interpretations of tricky passages, and one should not rely on one of them alone. J. C. de Moor (1987), is not without his insights, but too confident in his highly speculative reconstructions. I have tried to avoid making use of any passage whose meaning is seriously controversial.

⁸² Similar headings are found on tablets of the Keret and Aqhat epics mentioned below: *l-Krt*, *l-Aqht*. The same preposition is used in headings of Hebrew Psalms associated with David (*l-Dāwīd*).

⁸³ There is a large-scale new edition covering these two tablets by M. S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (*Vetus Testamentum*, Supp. 55), Leiden 1994.

⁸⁴ *KTU* 1. 3 iii 38–42, 5 i 1–3.

for a window to be made. Its opening is a fissure in the clouds, out of which Baal's thunder-voice breaks forth to intimidate his foes.

The last act now begins. Feeling secure in his power, Baal sends a challenge to Mot (Mōtu), that is, Death, who replies with fierce confidence. In what follows it appears that Baal has fallen victim to Mot. The Sun-goddess helps Baal's sister 'Anat to recover his body for burial on Mt. Šapan. Athirat proposes 'Athtar as the new king; he goes up to Šapan, but finds that he is too small for Baal's throne. 'Anat goes to Mot and supplicates him to release Baal from his power. In vain. She goes a second time, and now kills Mot, sieves him, roasts him, mills him, and finally scatters him to the birds. Baal is presently found restored to life, and he resumes his throne. But Mot too manages to recover from extinction. In the end he fights Baal hand to hand, is worsted, and acknowledges Baal's kingship.

It is evident that much of this story is designed to reflect the cyclical vicissitudes of the storm-god, the alternation of rainy season and drought, calm sea and wild, seed-time and harvest. What is less clear is whether the epic was simply a literary concatenation of the various Baal myths of this type, or whether its author intended a systematic sequence corresponding to a complete annual cycle.⁸⁵ It is also uncertain what relation the epic may have had to the ritual calendar—whether, for example, it was recited at some particular festival, or different parts of it at different festivals. Fortunately we have no need to engage with these questions.

A number of other fragments, not in Ilmilku's hand, carry narrative about Baal. Two of them, *KTU* 1. 7 and 8, overlap in content with the main epic, but so diverge from it in detail that they are best regarded as reflecting different oral versions of the episodes in question; or, to be more exact, as having been written down from a different person's memory, or the same person's on a different occasion. Others (*KTU* 1. 10–12) relate events not represented in what we have of the epic. They may, of course, have been contained in lost parts of it, or they may come from stories that were never included in it. One of these narratives (10 + 11, probably parts of the same tablet) is concerned with a meeting of Ilmilku with 'Anat and, it seems, with his impregnation of a cow or cows. The other (12) is about a goddess giving birth, on El's instructions, to locusts(?), and Baal's campaign against them. This text seems to end with a few lines of laudatory address to Baal.

⁸⁵ For argument in this sense see esp. J. C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu according to the Version of Ilmilku*, Neukirchen 1971, and id. (1987); brief criticism in Gibson, op. cit., 7 n. 5.

Not all the poems about the doings of the gods had Baal as their central figure. A ritual text (*KTU* 1. 23) contains in its first 29 lines a number of short invocations and snippets of poetry, interspersed with instructions such as 'Seven times he shall speak (this) on the platform and the sacristans shall respond', and notes of essential requisites. There follow nearly a hundred verses of a poem relating how El found two wives who bore him firstly Dawn and Dusk, and then the 'Gracious Gods', who were the subject of the initial invocation on the tablet, and about whom a narrative then begins. Although there is a note at line 56 that the couplet about the conception of the Gracious Gods is to be recited five times (presumably to reflect the multiple birth), there is no statement that the poem is to be recited at the ceremony envisaged in the preceding text. But at least we can say that in this case there is a close relationship between the poem and a ritual. It contains the myth that the celebrants of the rite were expected to have in mind.

Epics about men

Among the tablets copied by Ilimilku are three (probably consecutive) from an epic about a king called Krt,⁸⁶ and three, possibly more, from another about one Daniel (*dnīl* = Dani-'ilu) and his son Aqhat, with whose name the work is labelled.⁸⁷

Keret is king of a place called Hbr, not identified with any certainty. He is distraught because he has married seven times but each wife has died and he is without issue. El, who is in some sense his father, visits him in a dream and advises him. After sacrificing to himself and Baal, he should lead a large army against the city of Udm (perhaps Udmu near Ashtaroth) and demand the hand of Hry, the king's beautiful daughter, whose name some vocalize cheerfully as Hurray. Keret does all that he is told, and on the way to Udm, passing by the shrine of Athirat at Tyre, he vows to dedicate to the goddess twice Hry's weight in silver, thrice her weight in gold, if his expedition is successful.

It is. He gets the girl. All the gods attend the wedding and confer their blessings upon it. Everything seems set fair. Hry duly produces sons and daughters year after year. But Keret has neglected to fulfil his vow to Athirat. She is angry, and causes Keret to fall sick. For many

⁸⁶ Conventionally vocalized as Keret; I follow the convention, though it is certainly erroneous. Some propose to identify him with Kirta, a Mitannian ruler in the fifteenth(?) century (Albright, 103 = repr. 118).

⁸⁷ Above, n. 82. The tablets are respectively *KTU* 1. 14–16 and 17–19 (+ 20–22?). The fragments numbered 20–2 mention Daniel and are reasonably taken to belong somehow to the Aqhat story. (See de Moor [1987] for an interesting reconstruction.) It is not clear, however, whether they belong to Ilimilku's recension. Caquot-Szzyrmer (461) say that the scribes are different.

months he languishes, seemingly doomed to die. Seven times El asks the gods which of them will undertake to banish Keret's illness; but not one of them answers. He has to do it himself. Keret recovers his royal appetite—his wife cooks him a sheep for dinner—and his health. Reluctantly his heir Yašib takes it into his head to propose that Keret should abdicate on medical grounds, handing over the kingdom to himself. His father responds to the suggestion with a string of the most robust maledictions. If the third tablet was the last, the composition came to an abrupt and dramatic end at this point.

The Daniel of the other poem may be the same as the Daniel whom Ezekiel mentions, together with Noah and Job, as a byword for righteousness (Ezek. 14. 12–20). His standing epithet *mt rpi* may mean 'man of Raphon', a place thirty miles east of the Sea of Galilee. He is not portrayed as a king but as one of a class of respected personages who judge disputes. Like Keret, he is wretched because he has no offspring. Baal intercedes with El on his behalf. Soon Daniel is blessed with a son, Aqhat. Kothar, the divine craftsman, pays a visit and presents a marvellous bow as a gift for the boy.

Anat covets the bow and asks Aqhat to give it to her, promising him immortality in exchange. But he does not believe that immortality is available to mortals, and he suggests, reasonably enough, that she could apply to Kothar for another bow of the same model. The goddess is furious. She denounces Aqhat to El and secures his permission to take her revenge. She discharges her warrior Yatpan against Aqhat, killing him, and seizes the bow. But as she flies off with it, it falls and is broken. A blight then comes upon the land, apparently through Anat's agency.

The ensuing narrative is hard to follow, but Daniel recovers Aqhat's remains from inside the mother of eagles and buries them. After the young man has been extensively mourned, his sister Puḡat, with Daniel's encouragement, undertakes to avenge him. Disguising herself as Anat, she visits Yatpan in his tents and receives hospitality there. The tablet breaks off at this point, but no doubt, after Puḡat had gained Yatpan's confidence, she slew him.

These two poems about human characters cannot be regarded as 'historical' epics in the sense defined above (pp. 68 f.). The vague details given about Keret and Daniel do not allow us to put them in any known historical context. Interest is not at all focussed on their achievements in the world of men. Keret's expedition against Udm is a merely subordinate incident serving to provide him with an ideal wife; if any historical hostility between Hbr and Udm (wherever they were) lies behind the story, it has all but ceased to resonate. The emphasis is

instead on these persons' interaction with the gods, and on their resilience in the face of disasters sent by the gods. Our understanding of the poems is not complete enough for us to be sure about their purpose and point. But perhaps they may be suitably categorized as moral or exemplary epics.

Hymns

The other identifiable Ugaritic poetic genre is the hymn. We have two examples from a tablet (*KTU* 1. 24) found in the temple of Baal. The longer one, some 45 verses, is to the goddess Nikkal-Ib. It begins

I will (or: let me) sing of Nikkal-Ib (and) Hīrhib king of summer,

proceeds with the story of Nikkal's betrothal to the Moon-god Yarihu, and concludes

Nikkal-Ib, of whom I sing,
light of Yarihu, may Yarihu also light you.

The second hymn, a mere dozen lines, probably also began with the formula 'I sing of'. Its subject is the Kotharatu, the goddesses presiding over conception and childbirth. There is mention of a woman called Prbht, and it looks as if this hymn, perhaps both of the hymns on the tablet, were destined to be sung at her wedding. Apart from these there is a hymn of praise to Baal, and a ritual hymn in which the gods are apparently invited to drink and make merry with the worshippers.⁸⁸

HEBREW

At the time when Ugarit was destroyed, early in the twelfth century, the desert nomads called Hebrews ('*ibrīm*, People from Beyond) had perhaps already begun to intrude into Palestine from the south. The Hebrews of the historical period developed from the fusion of these intruders with the existing population. According to the national myth as it developed later, the newcomers advanced triumphantly through the Promised Land, expelling or exterminating the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The reality was different, as the biblical narrative itself acknowledges in many places. There was much accommodation to the older Canaanite culture. There was intermarriage. Native cults of Baalim and Asheroth

continued for centuries to attract Hebrew participants, while the old head of the pantheon, El, was identified with Yahweh. The immigrants had little effect on the language of the country, for Hebrew is a Canaanite dialect, not very different from Phoenician or Moabite. They learned to write in the Canaanite script,⁸⁹ and became familiar with Canaanite mythology and literary forms.⁹⁰

In the Old Testament we have a substantial corpus of Hebrew writings in prose and verse, built up over many centuries down to the Hellenistic period. While none of these texts comes into question as a direct source of material taken up in early Greek poetry, they are of use for our inquiry in several respects. They provide a valuable supplement to our other early evidence for Semitic religious attitudes and practices. They contain important residues of myth and folk-tale, and relevant examples of narrative motifs and techniques. They also supply most of our information about West Semitic linguistic idiom, and help to identify and illustrate Semiticisms of phrasing in Greek texts. For these purposes the prose books are hardly, if at all, less useful than the poetic texts, and it will be necessary to make frequent reference to them.

In the following pages I attempt to give a brief outline of literary genres and an idea of the historical place of individual books within the whole framework. It is not possible to enter into discussion of the countless critical questions that exercise biblical scholars with regard to the dating of particular works, the analysis of their sources, the identification of later additions, and so forth. I have taken up what I believe to be well-founded and respectable positions; but the reader is warned that many points are more or less controversial, and advised to consult specialist works for detailed information and argument.

Early songs

As far as we can see, the Hebrews never had epic poetry. As among the Arabs, its place was taken by prose saga based on family and tribal tradition, with intermittent quotation of songs reported to have been sung at certain critical moments. At least some of these songs, such as the Song of Deborah (*Jdg.* 5) and the Song of Moses (*Deut.* 32), seem to be genuine documents from the age of migration and the early monarchy, and these count as the oldest Hebrew compositions that have come down to us.

⁸⁹ Only after the Exile did they begin to change to the 'square script', based mainly on Aramaic script, which became the characteristic Hebrew script.

⁹⁰ On the Canaanite heritage in Israelite culture cf. O. Eissfeldt, *CAH* ii(2), 560-9; on the affinity between Hebrews and Phoenicians, Brown, 7 f.

⁸⁸ *KTU* 1. 101 and 108; M. Dietrich and O. Loretz in *TTAT* ii, 821-3.

The songs include: psalms of thanksgiving for victory; acclamations of a victor; mocking of the defeated; dirges; personal triumph songs; personal songs of praise and thanksgiving; incantations, blessings, and curses; inspired utterances of prophets or kings; declarations by Yahweh or his angel; solemn name-givings; riddles and proverbs; revolutionary songs; admonitions in hymn form. The absence of any clear fragments of epic narrative among all these verse quotations is striking, and difficult to explain on the hypothesis⁹¹ that epic poems lie behind the biblical histories.

At a later period there is evidence for work songs, for example at the vintage (Isa. 16. 10); convivial songs (Gen. 31. 27, Amos 6. 5, Isa. 5. 12, 24. 8 f.); songs of street prostitutes (Isa. 23. 16).

The Psalms

What we call the Psalms, after their Septuagint title *Ψαλμοί* ('Harp songs'), are called in Hebrew *šhillim*, Praise songs. Individual psalms, however, are given a variety of different labels in their headings: not only *šhillāh* but also *špillāh* ('prayer'), *miznôr* or *šir* (different terms for 'song'), *maškal* ('piece of wisdom'), *miktām* or *šiggāyôn* (meaning uncertain). The corpus was put together from various smaller collections. There are blocks of psalms attributed to David⁹² or to other early singers or singers' guilds;⁹³ another block consists of 'songs of pilgrimage'.⁹⁴ The whole collection was complete by 150 BC at the latest, possibly as much as two centuries earlier.

The dates of individual poems vary widely. One or two may perhaps go back to David (1011–971) or his time; but the ascription of seventy-three psalms to him (and of two to Solomon and one to Moses) is not based on genuine tradition but on his reputation as a musician and as the founder of the whole cultic organization. A number of others refer to a king and evidently belong to the monarchic period. Others equally clearly date from the Exile or later. Many are undatable.

There is also some diversity in the psalms' nature and original purpose. Among those in which the king plays a role, we find: priestly hymns celebrating the king's accession or its anniversary (2, 21, 72, 110); royal vows (101); prayers by or for the king before a battle (20,

⁹¹ Advocated by, among others, C. H. Gordon, *New Horizons in Old Testament Literature*, 1960, 23 f.; Cross (1973), 293, and in R. E. Friedman (ed.), *The Poet and the Historian. Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, Chico, Calif. 1983, 13–39, esp. 20–5.

⁹² Ps. 3–41, 51–71, 108–10, 138–45. Cf. above, n. 82.

⁹³ The Sons of Qorah, 42–9, 84–8; Asaph, 50 + 73–83; Heman, 88; Ethan, 89.

⁹⁴ Ps. 120–34. See further O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament. An Introduction*, Oxford 1974, 152 f., 448–53.

144); thanksgivings after the successful conclusion of battle (18, 118); a petitioners' hymn (132). Among the others, we find on the one hand psalms clearly designed for collective acts of worship, on the other, poems of a more personal nature. The first category includes straightforward hymns of praise to God (95, 98, 100, 148, 150, etc.), songs of thanksgiving (107, 136; for harvest, 67), laments and complaints over national disaster (44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 89), and prayer in time of national danger (83). All but the last have counterparts among the personal psalms.⁹⁵ An important further type of personal psalm is that expressing affirmation of trust in God in spite of all (4, 11, 23, 27, 62, 91, 121).

The Prophets

The pre-literary prophets remembered in the historical books, such as Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha, are agents of God who have access to knowledge of matters hidden from others. They possess the power to bless and curse and perform various wonders, and they are given to issuing warnings, admonitions, or reproofs, especially to kings. Because they speak on God's authority, they enjoy a unique freedom to denounce the king or anyone else, and represent an important counterweight to monarchic power, provided that they keep the respect of the people. They seem to stand in the ancient tradition attested many centuries earlier at Mari and in the eleventh century at Byblos (above, p. 50).

By the eighth century the prophet's inspired utterance (*nē'ûm*) had come to be addressed, more often than not, to the general populace. His position licensed him to declaim in dramatic terms on anything from public morals to international affairs. The practice now began of recording prophecies in writing. The written versions, at least, usually had poetic form; to what extent this was true of the oral originals, we cannot establish. The books of the prophets were by no means immune to later additions. Nearly all of them contain some adventitious material, most notably the books of Isaiah and Zechariah, each of which contains large portions of considerably later date than the primary text.

A rough chronological grouping is offered here, but it should be borne in mind that some datings are controversial.

Middle to late eighth century. Hosea, Amos, Micah, Isaiah 1–39.

Second half of seventh century. Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk. 626–c.585. Jeremiah.

The Exile (587–38). Ezekiel, Obadiah, Isaiah 40–55.

⁹⁵ E.g. hymns of praise: 103, 104; thanksgiving, 30, 66, 116, 138; lament: 3, 5–7, 13, etc. Compare the poems that make up the Lamentations ascribed to Jeremiah.

Late sixth century. Haggai (521/0), Zechariah 1-8 (520-18), Isaiah 56-66.

First half of fifth century. 'Malachi'.⁹⁶

Fourth or third century. Joel, Jonah, Zechariah 9-14.

The wisdom books

Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes stand under this heading. They are all late compilations, but they draw on traditions, and to some extent material, of much greater antiquity.

Job is widely regarded as a post-exilic work, perhaps of the fourth century, if not the third. Its central theme, the righteous man who suffers an accumulation of undeserved misfortunes, relates it clearly to the group of Mesopotamian religious-philosophical poems described on p. 81, and presumably reflects Babylonian influence on Jewish literary modes. It also draws on psalmodic genres such as the hymn and the lament.

Proverbs is a corpus made up of several instruction poems and proverb collections of different dates. Their separate headings are preserved: 1. 1 'Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel'; 10. 1 'Proverbs of Solomon'; 22. 17 'Words of wise men'; 24. 23 'These too belong to wise men'; 25. 1 'These too are proverbs of Solomon, which men of Hezekiah king of Judah transcribed'; 30. 1 'Words of Agur son of Yaqeh, from Massa'; 31. 1 'Words of Lemuel king of Massa, with which his mother admonished him'. Nothing is known of Agur and Lemuel. The second and third 'Solomon' collections, at least, are pre-exilic; the reference to Hezekiah points to a late eighth-century redaction of one of them. But they probably have no historical connection with Solomon. His role is that of the famous wise man typical of Near Eastern preceptive literature.⁹⁷ As usual in such works, the sage is represented as addressing his son. The 'Words of wise men' section shows a particular affinity with an Egyptian wisdom text of about the thirteenth or twelfth century, the *Instruction of Amen-em Opet*: ten of the first eleven sayings are derived from that source.

In Ecclesiastes Solomon is again presented as the source of wisdom, though his identity is for some reason veiled under the title Qōhélet (leader of the assembly), son of David, king in Jerusalem. The work was probably written in the third century, perhaps in Alexandria. It shows some signs of Egyptian influence, and perhaps of Greek.

⁹⁶ A pseudo-name based on misunderstanding of *mal'aki* 'my messenger' in Mal. 3. 1.

⁹⁷ For Solomon's wisdom cf. 1 Ki. 4. 29-34, where he is credited with three thousand proverbs; 10. 1-10, 23-4.

Greek influence is more clearly apparent in the extra-canonical work which we know by the similar name of Ecclesiasticus, composed in the early second century BC by Jesus ben Sira. But as a whole it still stands in the older Hebrew tradition. Both in form and in content it has much in common with the composite book of Proverbs.

The Song of Songs

This is in fact a collection of two dozen or more disconnected love and wedding songs. In its present form it probably dates from the third century BC, but many of the songs may be a good deal older. We are lucky to have these specimens of at least one genre of Hebrew secular poetry. The reason for their inclusion in the canon of 'Writings' (which seems to have been a matter of controversy for some time) was presumably the notion that the 'song' was an allegory, to be understood of Yuhweh's love of Israel.

The historical books

Apart from the two very late independent stories of Esther and Daniel, the narrative books of the Old Testament fall into two great cycles. The first extends from Genesis to Kings, and offers a continuous history from the creation of the world to the death in exile of Jehoiachin, the last surviving king of Judah. The other is made up of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. It too begins at the beginning of things, or rather with Adam, though the times before the establishment of the kingdom are covered only by summary genealogies. It continues to the renewal of organized Judaism under the Persian empire by Nehemiah and Ezra.

The first cycle is a complex amalgam of myths and legends, folk-tales, family and tribal saga, genuine history, and religious law-codes. It may have reached its final form in the fifth century. The Pentateuch, which takes the story as far as the death of Moses, evolved (according to the common view) through the progressive redaction, unification, and augmentation of a number of earlier texts of various dates, so interlaced that the analyst can often disentangle the separate strands. The following books, from Joshua to Kings,⁹⁸ now tend to be regarded as basically the work of a single historian who took his starting-point from an early form of Deuteronomy.

Some biblical scholars have held that behind this corpus it is possible to identify sources going back as far as the tenth century. One in particular, the narrative of the 'Yahwist', has been regarded as an early

⁹⁸ Excluding the novella Ruth, which is not placed with the historical books in the Hebrew tradition, only in the Greek.

document. Recent studies have cast doubt on this, and currently there seems to be no agreement on the possibility of isolating any passages in these books (apart from quotations of poems and songs) that were composed before the late seventh century. However, the authors or redactors have so much historical information about the monarchic period at their disposal that it seems hard to doubt that they were able to draw upon a collection of writings reaching back to the reign of Solomon (970–930), which is incidentally the time of the first Hebrew inscriptions. Some of the reported songs, as mentioned above, appear to go back even further, to the eleventh century, but these were presumably preserved by oral transmission in the first instance.

The second narrative cycle, which lays particular emphasis on the religious aspects of Israel's history, was put together in the fourth century. For the period down to and including the Exile (Chronicles) it draws mainly, though not exclusively, on Genesis–Kings. For the subsequent period it makes use of various documents, including an Aramaic source which quoted royal correspondence; the largest part is based on the memoirs of Nehemiah, who was active as governor of Judah between 445 and 432, and of Ezra, who came to Jerusalem in 398/7 as a missionary from Babylonia with the blessing of the Persian king, Artaxerxes II, and promulgated 'the book of the law of Moses', that is, apparently, the Pentateuch.⁹⁹ The Chronicler transcribes long sections from his sources verbatim, to the extent of leaving Aramaic untranslated.

Late writings

Hardly any part of the Old Testament consists of pure pre-exilic material untouched by later revisions and additions. A high proportion of the whole, therefore, is of later date, at least in its present form, than Homer and other Greek poets with whom we are concerned in this inquiry. Some of it is no earlier than the third or early second century. So how much use is it to us? To what extent do these later writings preserve older ideas and material?

The fact is that the most ancient mythical and theological elements sometimes appear most prominently in late texts. The reason is probably that the priestly redactors who controlled the formation of the canon looked askance at them and tended to exclude them.

One such element is the original polytheism of Canaan. For Yahweh's early worshippers he was one god among others, albeit the greatest. Poets of Israel readily took over the old Canaanite (and

Mesopotamian) motif of the divine assembly. In a few of the early Psalms Yahweh is portrayed 'in the assembly of El, in the midst of the gods', 'in the gathering of the holy ones', surrounded by the 'sons of gods', that is, according to Hebrew idiom, unspecified members of the category 'god'. He addresses them saying 'You are gods, you are all sons of the High One'.¹⁰⁰ A ninth-century prophet is related to have had a vision of a council at which Yahweh conversed with members of the 'host of heaven'.¹⁰¹ Such scenes hardly suited the outlook of later orthodoxy, and we might have expected them to disappear altogether after the time of Amos. Yet the two in the prologue of Job (1. 6–12, 2. 1–6) are as vivid as any: here again are the 'sons of the gods' gathered before Yahweh, and among them the Adversary, the *śāṭān*, emerges as an individual who debates with Yahweh and is sent off with authority to act, just like a god in Ugaritic or Homeric epic.

Another very ancient element is the myth of Yahweh's victory over the fury of the sea, symbolized by the monster Rahab ('Storminess') or Leviathan. In some passages this is brought into connection with the miraculous division of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus. The Ugaritic evidence, however, shows that it was originally adapted from an old Canaanite myth, that of Baal's defeat of Yammu, the Sea, conceived as a seven-headed serpent which is actually referred to under the name *līwātān*.¹⁰² Yet the Old Testament references to the myth occur predominantly in texts of the post-exilic period.¹⁰³

Certain old myths that do not bulk large in the Old Testament were taken up and developed in later non-canonical writings, so that even these may sometimes be of use to us. This is particularly the case with myths about the antediluvian age: stories of the intercourse of gods with mortal women, the race of giants, and the shortening of human life (all briefly mentioned in Gen. 6. 1–4). It must be acknowledged that the later writers are likely to have modified the myths in the interests of their own individual constructs. Nevertheless they may in some cases preserve significant motifs and details from more ancient accounts that have not survived, or from traditional Jewish folklore.

Most of the works in question are apocalyptic in character. The most substantial, and the earliest, are the *Book of Enoch* (*1 Enoch*) and the

¹⁰⁰ Ps. 29. 1; 82. 1, 6; 89. 6 f.

¹⁰¹ 1 Ki. 22. 19–22.

¹⁰² KTU 1. 5 i 1–3, cf. 1. 3 iii 38–42.

¹⁰³ Isa. 27. 1 (fourth century or later?), 51. 9; Ps. 74. 13 f. (some date this as late as the second century); 89. 10 (perhaps part of an early psalm, but now incorporated in a lament from the Exile); Job 9. 8, 13; 26. 12. In 'Isaiah' we find not only the name *Līwātān* but the same word for 'serpent' (*līwātān*) and the same epithet 'twisting' (*šāqallātān*, found only here) as in the Ugaritic passages (*līwātān*, 'twisting').

⁹⁹ By confusing Artaxerxes I and II the Chronicler was misled into dating Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem sixty years too early, before Nehemiah's.

Book of Jubilees. *1 Enoch*¹⁰⁴ is actually a collection of five separate books associated with the legendary Enoch. The first and third (chapters 1–36 and 72–82) were composed not later than 200 BC, the fourth and fifth (83–90 and 91–108) in the second century BC, the second (37–71) most likely in the first century. *Jubilees* is a re-telling of events from the creation to the Exodus, presented as a revelation to Moses on Sinai, with an overall chronological scheme based on 49-year 'jubilee' periods. The work is dated to the late second or early first century BC.¹⁰⁵

Both *1 Enoch* (at least, the first, third, fourth, and fifth parts of it) and *Jubilees* were current among the Qumran community in the second and first centuries BC, and they may have originated there. There seems to have been in that milieu considerable interest in the category of myths to which I have referred, those set in the times before the Flood.

A few of the fragmentary texts from Qumran—the Dead Sea Scrolls, as they are more popularly known—will be cited in places: in particular the uncanonical psalms (third to second century) from the Psalms Scroll (11QPs), the Damascus Rule (c. 100 BC), and the first-century exegetical fragment on the ages of creation (4Q180).¹⁰⁶

PHOENICIAN

We can be brief here in view of the melancholy fact that Phoenician literature, at any rate before the middle of the first millennium BC, is entirely lost. The reasons are simple. At an early date the Phoenicians took to writing in an alphabetic script. They have left inscriptions on stone and on objects of metal or ivory, but for longer documents, including those of a literary nature, they used perishable materials, such as leather and Egyptian papyrus, instead of the clay tablets that preserved what we have of the Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literatures.¹⁰⁷ After the

¹⁰⁴ Sometimes called the Ethiopic Enoch, because the complete work is preserved only in Ethiopic manuscripts, though Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Coptic fragments are also known. It is thus distinguished from the later 'Slavonic Enoch' (*2 Enoch*, also known as *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*), a work originally written in Greek sometime before AD 70. Annotated translations of both works with introductions and bibliographies are available in H. F. D. Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, Oxford 1985, 169–362.

¹⁰⁵ Again the complete text survives only in Ethiopic. Translation: R. H. Charles in Sparks, op. cit., 1–139.

¹⁰⁶ I cite these texts from G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed., Harmondsworth 1987. Other, mostly even later works that I shall cite very occasionally, such as *4 Ezra* (= the '4 Esdras' of the English versions of the Apocrypha; c. AD 100), the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch* (c. AD 120), the *Apocalypse of Moses* (first century AD?), and the Testament of Reuben, from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, are to be found in Sparks, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ On writing materials in the West Semitic area see G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing*, 3rd ed. rev. S. A. Hopkins. London 1976, 78–84, 239–41.

Hellenistic age, when Phoenician culture passed away and the language gave way to Aramaic, there remained no religious or scholastic tradition to conserve a Phoenician literature through later antiquity and the Middle Ages, as happened with Greek and Hebrew. Its disappearance is particularly regrettable in view of the part that Greek contacts with the Phoenicians must have played in opening Greek poetry to Semitic influences of various kinds.

The occasional biblical or classical reference to Phoenician songs does not help us much;¹⁰⁸ nor do depictions on Phoenician ivories of musicians playing various instruments. They only serve to remind us that the Phoenicians enjoyed music and song, and presumably poetry, no less than did their neighbours.

Some of their neighbours in fact provide clues to the kinds of poetry that the Phoenicians must have possessed in the early period. The many points of contact between Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry imply a more broadly based Canaanite tradition to which both in some sense belong and of which Phoenician poetry must have been the central representative. They testify to some of the same divine myths and titles and the same polytheistic system, and they obey essentially the same principles of poetic and metrical structure. It follows that poetry composed on these principles—certainly hymnic poetry, and probably epic¹⁰⁹—and with similar mythological content, telling of the assembly of the gods, of the Storm-god's defeat of the many-headed dragon of the sea, and so on, must have been current in Canaan as a whole in the late second millennium. Even the post-exilic Jews preserved something of this tradition, and *a fortiori* we should expect the Phoenicians to have done so in the period 1200–700.¹¹⁰ They continued, after all, to worship the same gods as we meet in the Ugaritic poems, Baal, El, 'Anat, 'Aštart, as we know from dedications and personal names.

It is a safe assumption that they had hymns to these gods. It is less certain, but not unlikely, that they had poetic narratives about them, and perhaps about human enterprises in which gods intervened. We have one piece of indirect evidence, of an unexpected kind: an elaborate work of art with the pictorial representation of a story that may have been the subject of a Phoenician poem. It is a silver bowl of Phoenician craftsmanship, 18.9 cm. in diameter, dating from about 710–675 BC and

¹⁰⁸ *Ick* 26. 13, 'And I will stop the clamour of your songs, and the voice of your lyres will be no more', *Ikt* 2. 79 on the Linos song.

¹⁰⁹ The term 'Phoenician', which is taken from Greek and has no Semitic counterpart, tends by convention to be reserved for the period after 1200 BC, but this does not reflect any change of nature of culture. The Phoenicians called themselves 'Canaanites' (or 'Sidonian', 'Tyrian',

recovered from a tomb at Praeneste.¹¹⁰ Its inner face is plated with gold and decorated with scenes in relief in three concentric bands, the whole composition being enclosed by a serpent whose head touches the tip of its tail. It is the outermost band that tells the story, in a series of nine tableaux that succeed one another anticlockwise:

1. A king (or nobleman) drives out from his walled city in his chariot (which is equipped with a parasol) to go hunting.
2. Arriving in the wooded hills, he dismounts, leaving his vehicle in his driver's hands, and aims his bow at a stag which he has sighted on a crest.
3. He follows it as it bounds away, wounded, over the hills.
4. He has killed it and is butchering the carcass, which he has hung from a tree. The driver meanwhile feeds the horses from a portable feed-stand.
5. Seated regally on a throne with a footstool and parasol, he makes offerings to the Sun-goddess, represented as a winged disc. From a hiding-place in the rocks a savage Silenus-face peers out at him.
6. The savage has rushed out, armed with a sling and preparing to hurl a boulder at the king. He, however, is removed from all danger, for the Sun-goddess, mindful of his piety, has sprouted a face and two arms, between which she holds him aloft, driver, chariot, horses and all. Are we to understand that she has actually borne him away through the air? In view of what follows it seems more likely that the artist is simply indicating in symbolic terms that she has enfolded the hunter and his entourage in her protection.
7. The king in his chariot, bow at the ready, now charges at the savage, who is already falling under the horses' hooves.
8. The king has dismounted and stands with one foot on the cowering savage; in his right hand he holds an axe aloft ready to smite him, and in his left hand a whip.
9. King and driver ride back into their city as decorously as they set out.

Burkert quotes with approval a suggestion of C. Grottanelli and A. Hermay that 'the artists who decorated these pieces, Phoenicians on Cyprus or Greeks trained by Phoenicians, were illustrating a Greek tale, a "song" current on Cyprus'. It is certainly probable that there was a poem; but it is more likely to have been a Phoenician than a Greek one.

¹¹⁰ Villa Giulia 61565. A second bowl bearing exactly the same sequence of scenes survives in fragmentary state; it was found at Kourion in Cyprus. See G. Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean*, Berlin 1985, 278–83; Gehring and Niemeyer (as ch. 1, n. 25), 37 Abb. 23, 186 f.; Burkert (1992), 104.

The Sun could not be female in Greek, as she appears to be in the rescue scene of the reliefs, whereas in West Semitic the gender varies.¹¹¹ The story is a moralizing or exemplary tale concerned with man's relationship to the gods, and as such it seems to belong to the same general category as the Ugaritic Keret and Aqhat epics, or the Akkadian *Lugal*.

There is also some evidence for a Phoenician poetic cosmogony. From Greek sources we know of certain Phoenician antiquarian writers, whose activity should probably be placed in the Hellenistic period or not long before. We know something of one Mochos, whose work was translated into Greek by a certain Laitos; and rather more of Sanchuniathon of Beirut, translated by Philo of Byblos.¹¹² Both Mochos and Sanchuniathon incorporated in their work versions of a cosmogonic narrative which appears to derive from a poetic archetype of the seventh or sixth century.¹¹³ It was a cosmogony of a distinctive sort, and it seems to have exercised an influence on Thales, Pherecydes, and the oldest of the Orphic theogonies.¹¹⁴

For the rest we are in the dark. But it is reasonable to suppose that many other types of literature existed among the Phoenicians: wisdom texts, perhaps, prayers and songs of thanksgiving to the gods, dirges, love lyrics, prophecies, addresses to kings.

HURRIAN AND HITTITE

To complete our survey we must move outside the Semitic area and look briefly at the mythological narrative literature of the Hurrians and the Hittites, the most powerful (at different times) of the Semites' northern neighbours.

The Hurrians, who spoke a language thought by some specialists to have East Caucasian affinities, are first heard of in the second half of the third millennium, when they were located in the hills to the north of Mesopotamia. From this time on they were in continuous contact with Mesopotamian culture and heavily influenced by it. In the centuries after the fall of the Akkadian Dynasty, Hurrians achieved domination over a

¹¹¹ Ugaritic *šapšu* is feminine; Hebrew *šemeš* is variable in gender. Some Anatolian solar deities were female, like the Sun-goddess of Arinna and the Hurrian Šimegi. 'Il s'agit là certainement d'un fait aréal' (J.-M. Durand, *MARI* 7, 1993, 60).

¹¹² *FGrHist* 784 and 790; J. Barr, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 57, 1974, 17–68; R. A. Olsen, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 110, 1978, 115–26; Baumgarten (1981).

¹¹³ See *CQ* 44, 1994, 289–307.

¹¹⁴ I have dealt with this elsewhere: West (1971), 28–36; (1983), 103–5, 198–201; *CQ* 44, loc.

vast area extending across northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia to the east Tigris regions and the Zagros mountains. This was at first not a united empire but a chain of city-states. But from the sixteenth century one of these states, known as Mitanni (more correctly Mittani) and based in the upper Habur region, established itself as a major power, exercising dominion over north Syria and Assyria and engaging with Egyptian armies in Palestine. By now there were considerable numbers of Hurrian-speakers as far west as the Mediterranean coast. They spread into Cilicia no later than the fifteenth century, and perhaps to Cyprus in the fourteenth.¹¹⁵

The Hittites had been growing in strength and military expertise since the seventeenth century, expanding from their earlier homeland on the Cappadocian plateau of east central Anatolia, first northward into the Hatti land across the Halys, where they made their new capital at Hattusa (Boğazköy), and then eastward and southward into Hurrian and Syrian territories. In one sensational push down the Euphrates under Mursili I they reached Babylon and sacked it. For over two centuries they jostled against Mitanni, until under Suppiluliuma I, around 1330, they succeeded in breaking its power once and for all. Culturally, however, they were much affected by Hurrian influences, especially in matters of religion and mythology.

From Suppiluliuma's time the Hittite empire remained the greatest power in western Asia until its sudden disintegration about 1180, when Hattusa was destroyed. The royal archives at Hattusa at that time contained well over ten thousand cuneiform tablets in Akkadian, Hurrian, and Hittite. Fragments of the Akkadian classics *Atrahasis* and *Gilgamesh* are represented there. Of the Hittite tablets, the largest number are prescriptions for rituals; there are also state documents of various kinds, royal annals, prayers, laws, treaties, correspondence, instructions to officials; omen texts and oracles; and a treatise by a Mitannian authority on the care and training of horses.

The number of mythological texts is quite small, and it is noteworthy that none of the myths seem to be original Hittite ones: they are all taken over from neighbouring peoples. Some of them are Hattic (from the indigenous population of the land north of the Halys) and closely bound up with Hattic religious rituals that the Hittites took over from their subjects. Some are Hurrian. Some are Babylonian, including versions of

Utgimesh and *Šar tamhāri* and a fragment involving *Atrahasis*. One or two are Canaanite.¹¹⁶

Of most interest to us are the Hurrian group. That they are translated and adapted from Hurrian originals is indicated by the prominence that Hurrian gods enjoy in them and by the setting of the action in Hurrian territory, as well as by fragments of the actual Hurrian texts.¹¹⁷ Unlike Hittite tales, these narratives patently stand in a poetic tradition. It is not clear whether the Hittite versions are themselves metrical—if they are, the copyists ignored the verse divisions—but at least they appear to reflect the poetic structure of the underlying Hurrian models.¹¹⁸ Two of them are identified as 'songs' by titles in colophons, and two have poems containing the word *ishamihhi*, 'I (will) sing'. We recognize in them many of the same devices and techniques of poetic narrative that we find in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Greek epic: speeches framed by stereotyped formulae, the sending of messengers who repeat their instructions, and so on.

The predominant theme of these texts is kingship in heaven and the confusion in respect of the kingship between Kumarbi, 'father of the gods', and the storm-god Teššub.¹¹⁹ One text, which bore the title *Song of Kumarbi*, tells how the kingship passed from Alalu to Anu, then to Kumarbi, and ultimately to Teššub.¹²⁰ The narrative is notorious for its similarities to the succession myth in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and a fuller account of it will be given in chapter 6. In other texts we read of various attempts, all inspired by Kumarbi, to overthrow Teššub and install some other god as king in his place. None of them achieves more than temporary success.

The best preserved of these narratives, and the nearest thing we have to a view of a Hurrian epic, is the *Song of Ullikummi*.¹²¹ Fragments of

¹¹⁶ Nearly all the mythological texts, apart from those of the Akkadian tradition, are now available in accessible translations: Hoffner (1990); F. P. Dadd and A. M. Polvani, *La mitologia hittita*, Brescia 1990; *TUAT* iii(4) (1995).

¹¹⁷ Güterbock, 3, 94–100.

¹¹⁸ See the discussion of H. G. Güterbock, *JCS* 5, 1951, 141–4, who attempts in the succeeding years a transcription of the *Song of Ullikummi* as verse. According to G. Wilhelm, the language of the Hurrian fragments is 'markedly archaic and close to that of the earliest Hurrian text, the inscription of Tish-atul of Urkesh, which is probably to be dated to the twenty-first century' (*CANE* ii 1246). It may be added that their mythology knows nothing of the Indo-Aryan gods venerated by the ruling dynasty of Mitanni in the fourteenth century. This archaism suggests a conservative poetic tradition with a long history.

¹¹⁹ Teššub was his Hurrian name; the Hittite texts replace it with his Hittite name, which is spelled by logographic writing but is believed to have been *Tarkunna*.

¹²⁰ Güterbock, 6–9, 34–41, 86–8, and in Röhlig (ed.), *Altorientalische Literatur* (as a. 5), 235 f.; A. Goetze in *ANET* 120 f.; improved Hittite text in Laroche, 39–47; Hoffner, 40–3; *TUAT* iii, 828–30; *TH* 344; E. Lebrun, *CANE* iii, 1972–4.

¹²¹ Güterbock, *JCS* 5, 1951, 135–61, and 6, 1952, 8–42 (text, translation, and commentary; repr.

¹¹⁵ É. Masson, *JRAS* 1975, 159–63. We have noted that Hurrian was one of the languages current at Ugarit. In general see G. Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, Warminster 1989; id., *CANE* ii, 1243–54.

several copies survive; in one of them the work extended over at least three tablets, probably more, with an average of some 300 lines of writing per tablet. The story tells how Kumarbi, after pondering how he can get at Teššub, goes and has intercourse with a huge rock, which gives birth to a stone child, Ullikummi. The infant, though lacking in intellectual and social qualities, being blind, deaf, and solid basalt, swiftly grows to a prodigious size, disrupting communications among the gods and threatening to push them out of heaven. The goddess Šauška (equated with Ishtar) tries to seduce him, but he does not notice; Teššub belabours him with thunder and lightning, but they have no effect. The upstart just goes on growing bigger. Eventually the wise Ea finds the solution. He remembers the old saw—the one with which heaven and earth were anciently separated from one another. It is brought out from its cupboard, and Ullikummi's ankles are sawn through. Teššub renews his assault and this time, we must assume, fells the bumptious monolith.

In the other texts of this group Teššub's adversaries are respectively ʿLAMA (logogram designating a tutelary deity), the god 'Silver', and a dragon named Hedammu.¹²² Each of them becomes, for a time, king of the gods. ʿLAMA's reign seems to have been a kind of golden age for mankind. Having everything in plenty, they cease making offerings to the gods. Ea becomes angry and deposes ʿLAMA, who is then, it seems, thoroughly beaten up by Teššub. The development of the other two stories is difficult to make out, except that the motif of seduction by Šauška appeared in the Hedammu narrative, as in the *Song of Ullikummi*. More susceptible than the giant of stone, the dragon made love to the goddess, and apparently allowed her to lead him away from his throne.

Scholars have taken to calling this whole series of texts 'the Kumarbi Cycle', and to speculating about their correct sequence.¹²³ There is, however, no proof that they formed a 'cycle' in the sense of a coherent series of texts meant to be taken in one particular order. Obviously the events related in the *Song of [Kumarbi]*, including the former kingships and the birth of Teššub from Kumarbi's body, belong in time before the rest. But that does not necessarily mean that the other compositions 'presuppose' the *Song of [Kumarbi]*. Each of them may have been an independent and self-sufficient entity.

This Hurrian tradition, while based on native myths, clearly betrays the influence of Mesopotamian culture. The Babylonian gods Enlil and Ea appear in the stories as members of the pantheon on the same footing as Kumarbi and Teššub; Ea's traditional home, the *Apsû* (the water below the earth), has been transmogrified into a city 'Apsuwa'. Kumarbi himself, in the kingship succession text, takes his seat at Nippur. Šauška is labelled 'queen of Nineveh'. The motif of the kingships of Alalu and Anu before Kumarbi derives from Mesopotamian theogonies.¹²⁴ The whole style is indebted to the Babylonian poetic tradition. The evidence of a Hurrian adaptation of *Gilgamesh* confirms this people's receptivity to that tradition, and raises the question whether the Hittite versions of Akkadian epics are not based, in part at least, on Hurrian intermediaries. However, we know that Assyrian merchants traded in Anatolia from early in the second millennium, and there are Akkadian as well as Hurrian tablets at Hattusa. The scribes who used cuneiform to write Hittite could not have done so without being imbued with Sumero-Akkadian learning. We should certainly assume direct Akkadian-Hittite connections as well as Akkadian-Hurrian-Hittite.

There is little in the way of wisdom literature surviving in Hurrian or Hittite. Mention was made earlier of a Hittite version of the *Instructions of Šube-amelim*. One important text that has come to light in recent years is a Hurro-Hittite bilingual bearing the title *Song of Emancipation*. It is a lengthy composition in at least six tablets. It will be possible to say more about it when it is edited,¹²⁵ but it appears to have been essentially a wisdom text containing certain narrative episodes, animal fables, general precepts, and more specific admonition addressed to the king of Ebla in north Syria. It began with a narrative about Teššub going to visit the goddess of the underworld for a feast in company with the former Gods. How this related to what followed is not clear.¹²⁶

There exist one or two hymns in Hittite, but they do not appear to reflect a native tradition any more than do the mythological narratives. The most notable is a hymn to the Sun-god Istanu, which dates from the second half of the fourteenth century. Although it contains some motifs that seem to be genuinely Hittite, the general conception and much of the substance are clearly based on Babylonian hymns to Shamash. It served

as *The Song of Ullikummi*, New York 1952); Goetze in *ANET* 121–5; Hoffner, 52–60; *TUAT* iii. 830–44 (*CTH* 345); Lebrun, *CANE* iii. 1974–7.

¹²² (i) Laroche, 31–8 (transliteration); Hoffner, 43–5. (ii) Laroche, 63–8; Hoffner in E. Neu and C. Rüster (edd.), *Documentum Asiae Minoris Antiquae*, Festschr. H. Otten, Wiesbaden 1988, 143–66; Hoffner, 45–8; *TUAT* iii. 856–8 (*CTH* 364). (iii) Laroche, 55–62; J. Siegelová, *Appu-Märchen und Hedammu-Mythos* (Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten, 14), Wiesbaden 1971, 35–87; Hoffner, 48–52; *TUAT* iii. 844–8 (*CTH* 348); Lebrun, *CANE* iii. 1977 f.

¹²³ Hoffner, 38–40.

¹²⁴ Güterbock, 106.

¹²⁵ So far only the cuneiform text has been published (*KBo* xxxii, 1990); discussion by E. Neu in *Abh. Mainz* 1988 no. 3; V. Haas and I. Wegner, *OLZ* 86, 1991, 384–91; A. Archi, *CANE* iv. 2373 f.; excerpts in *TUAT* iii. 861–5.

¹²⁶ For an attempt at an explanation see W. Burkert, 'Kronia-Feste und ihr altorientalisches Hintergrund', in S. Döpp (ed.), *Karnevalische Phänomene in antiken und nachantiken Kulturen und Literaturen*, Trier 1993, 11–30.

in turn as the model for a slightly later hymn to the Sun-goddess of Arinna—an indication of the poverty of the tradition.¹²⁷ Hattusa has also yielded bilingual copies of Akkadian hymns to Ishtar with Hittite translation, and one Sumerian–Akkadian–Hittite trilingual hymn to the Storm-god.¹²⁸ There is, moreover, a Hurrian ritual hymn to Teššub, and a Hurro-Hittite bilingual hymn to Šauška.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ See H. G. Güterbock, 'The Composition of Hittite Prayers to the Sun', *JAOS* 78, 1958, 237–45, who presents the Istanu hymn in transcription and translation and discusses its relation to other texts. For this hymn (= CTH 372) see also Lebrun, 93–111; A. Ünal in *TUAT* ii. 796–9; G. Wilhelm in W. Burkert and F. Stolz, *Hymnen der Alten Welt im Kulturvergleich* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 131), Göttingen 1994, 62–8. The hymn to the Sun-goddess of Arinna is CTH 371, *TUAT* ii. 793–5.

¹²⁸ CTH 312, 792. 1; 314.

¹²⁹ For the first see V. Haas, *Corpus der hurritischen Sprachdenkmäler* i/1, Rome 1984, no. 1 rev. 8'–14' and no. 3 rev. 1–5; Wilhelm, op. cit., 73 f.; for the second (CTH 717), Lebrun, 402–9.

3

Of Heaven and Earth

We are now ready to begin comparing the poetic traditions of early Greece with those developed in the Near East. At a later stage we shall be focussing on specific Greek authors, poems, and myths. The present chapter will be concerned with the wider framework of ideas about the earth, the world, and man's place in the world, that are not peculiar to particular poets but form a common groundstock of conviction or convention.

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF GODS

In Mesopotamian, Ugaritic, and Hurro-Hittite poetry and myth, as in Greek, the gods appear as a society of individuals, some male, some female, similar to human beings in form, speech, psychology, and social arrangements, but far surpassing them in power. Each has his or her own name, character, and special sphere(s) of activity. For example, we find—admittedly not all in any one text or tradition—the weather- or storm-god, the sun-god, the god of war, the goddess of love, a goddess (who may or may not be the same one) who delights in battle, a divine messenger, and a divine smith, corresponding respectively to the Homeric Zeus, Helios, Ares, Aphrodite, Athena, Hermes, and Hephaestus.

The gods have a chief, and it was he who assigned them their individual functions. Just as the Hesiodic Zeus is described as having allotted τιμαί or γέρα (privileges, provinces) among the gods after becoming their king,¹ so the Sumero-Babylonian Enlil, as king of heaven and earth, was thought of as having assigned the gods their roles: 'he imposed their tasks on all the gods'.² In a Sumerian poem known as *Enki and the World Order*, where Enki is the central figure, there is a long account of how he, with Enlil's consent, fixed the functions of all the gods and goddesses except for Inanna, who complained and demanded to know hers.³ In the Agušaya hymn 'fighting fury, pride in battle' is called Ishtar's 'portion' (*isqu*) which Ea determined for her; the royal sceptre,

¹ *Th.* 73 f., 393, 423–8, 885; cf. [Aesch.] *P.V.* 229 f.

² *Anzu* 161.

³ Bottéro–Kramer, 165–80.

the throne, the crown 'have been bestowed on her'; 'he gave her' manliness, greatness, and strength. This language is all extraordinarily similar to what we find in early Greek poetry over a thousand years later.⁴ When Marduk of Babylon had come to be regarded as king of the gods, he was duly celebrated as the one who 'to the Anunnaki of heaven and underworld shared out their allotted portions'.⁵

The title 'king of the gods' (βασιλεὺς θεῶν or ἀθανάτων or μακάρων) does not appear in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* but is common to Hesiod and many subsequent poets, always of Zeus (except when the reference is to a previous age). In the Near East its application changes at different periods and in different milieux, but it is a standard title, especially in Mesopotamia. We find it used of Anu, Enlil, Shamash, Marduk, Aššur, Yahweh too is 'a great king over all gods'.⁶ The feminine counterpart 'queen of the gods' is less common. It is applied especially to Ishtar, but also to Ereshkigal and others, and in Greek to Hera.⁷

An alternative title is 'king of heaven'. This is common in Akkadian, applied especially to the celestial deities Shamash and Anu, but also to Marduk, Ninurta, and others. It is the kingship of heaven, *šarrūt šamê*, that Anzu usurps from Enlil.⁸ In the north-west Semitic area the 'Lord of Heaven', Ba'al-šamêm, was an important deity in his own right.⁹ Zeus too is 'king in heaven' or 'of heaven'.¹⁰ He can also be called 'king of everything', and this too is a divine title in the Near East.¹¹

At the same time Zeus is 'father of the gods',¹² or, as commonly in Hesiod and Homer, 'father of gods and men'. Both titles are paralleled in the Near East. Anu, Anshar, Enlil, Ea, and others are all called 'father of the gods' in Akkadian texts; in the Hurro-Hittite narratives 'Kumarbi, father of the gods' is a formulaic phrase. The Babylonian moon-god Sin

is called 'begetter of gods and men'. The Ugaritic El is 'father of the sons of El' (i.e. of the gods), as well as 'father of mankind'.¹³

The gods also have a mother, known as 'mother of the gods' or 'great mother'. In Akkadian these titles, *ummi ilī*, *ummu rabītu*, are applied above all to Ninlil, the consort of Enlil, but on occasion also to others.¹⁴ At Ugarit Athirat is *qāniyat 'ilima*, *creatrix deorum*. The Phoenicians worshipped the Arabian goddess Lat as mother of the gods, while at Carthage Tanit was the 'great mother'.¹⁵ In Greece it is Rhea, Cybele, or Ge who has these titles. They can also stand independently as names of a goddess.¹⁶

Although the above titles may seem to imply that the gods are a single fraternity, they have closer familial ties among themselves. There are married couples among them, such as Enlil and Ninlil, Ea and Damiqna, Teššub and Hebat, Zeus and Hera. In many cases a deity is represented as the brother, sister, son, daughter, or lover of another. Ishtar is the daughter of Anu, Enlil, or Sin, the sister of Marduk, the twin of Shamash, the lover of Tammuz or Urash. Anat is the sister of Baal, as is Artemis of Apollo.

Division of provinces

Besides the references to the gods receiving their functions and provinces from a dispensation by their chief, there are other passages that speak more vaguely of their having got shares or portions, or of their making a division amongst themselves.¹⁷ More specifically, there is a tradition that their portions were determined by a casting of lots. The classic statement of this in Greek is the well-known passage from the fifteenth book of the *Iliad* (Poseidon speaks):

For we are three brothers whom Rhea bore to Kronos,
Zeus and myself and Hades lord of the dead,
And all is shared out three ways: each has his due.
I got the white-flecked sea to be my home
when the lots were cast, Hades the misty dark,
Zeus the wide heaven amid the airy clouds.

⁴ *Agūšaya* A m 15–17, iv 1–4; cf. Hes. *Th.* 348 ταύτην δὲ Διὸς πάρα μοῖραν ἔχουσι, *H.* 5. 428 οὐ τοι ... δέδοται πολέμηια ἔργα.

⁵ *En. el.* VI 46.

⁶ *Ps.* 95. 3, cf. 103. 19.

⁷ Tallqvist (1938), 238 f.; *Hymn. Hom.* 12. 2 (c). Matthiae, *Pind. Nem.* 1. 39.

⁸ Tallqvist (1938), 236 f.; *Anzu* (OBV) II 49 = (SBV) I 209. The Hittite Sun-god Istanu is called 'king of heaven and earth', *CTH* 372 i 2 (H. G. Güterbock, *JAOS* 78, 1958, 239; *TUAT* ii. 796).

⁹ Albright, 197–201 (repr. 226–31).

¹⁰ Hes. *Th.* 71, *Eur. I.T.* 749.

¹¹ *Soph. Tr.* 274 f. ἀναξὶς ὁ τῶν πάντων, *Zeὺς πατὴρ Ὀλύμπιος* (–ίων *P. Oxy.* 1805 a.c.); cf. 'Terpander', *PMG* 698 *Zeὺς πάντων ἀρχά, πάντων ἀγῆτωρ*; Tallqvist (1938), 233, 235. Yahweh is 'king of all the earth', *Ps.* 47. 3(2), 8 (7).

¹² *Archil.* 26. 6, 122. 2, *Aesch. Cho.* 783, *Eum.* 618, *Pind. Pyth.* 4. 194, etc.

¹³ Tallqvist (1938), 1 f., 87; *Anzu* I 42, 68, 70; Hoffner, 48, 50, 52, 54; *KTU* 1. 40 i 2, al.; 1. 14. 17, 43; cf. E. Ullendorff, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 46, 1963/4, 246, and *Isa.* 64. 8(7), 'Thou art our father'.

¹⁴ Tallqvist (1938), 22 f.; *BWL* 170. 23.

¹⁵ Robertson Smith, 56.

¹⁶ *Hymn. Hom.* 14. 1, *Pind. fr.* 70b. 9, 95. 3, *Eur. Hel.* 1302, 1355, etc.

¹⁷ Hes. *Th.* 112, *Hymn. Hom.* 22. 4, *Pind. Ol.* 7. 55.

while in earth and Olympus all still have equal rights.¹⁸

A striking parallel occurs in the introduction to *Atrahasis*:

They took the jar by the sides,
they cast the lot(s), the gods made their division:
Anu went up to the sky,
[Enlil took] the earth for his realm;
the bolts, the trap-bars of the sea
were established for Enki the wise chieftain.¹⁹

Burkert has written, 'There is hardly another passage in Homer which comes so close to being a translation of an Akkadian epic.' However, the *Atrahasis* passage does not stand in isolation. The introduction of the Sumerian poem *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* has a similar threefold division, albeit without explicit reference to the casting of lots.²⁰ A Hittite ritual text states that 'all the gods will assemble and cast lots': this is not in a cosmic context but is connected with establishing the relative importance and position of gods in a cultic setting.²¹ These myths reflect actual use of the lot in the Near East to allocate shares of a man's estate to his sons, shares of temple income to different officials, or generally 'to establish a sequence among persons of equal status that would be acceptable, as divinely ordained, to all participants'.²²

The great divisions of the universe, especially heaven, earth, and underworld, provide a basis for a general distinction between gods of heaven and of earth. The highest and most widely powerful are those of heaven. Homer speaks of the θεοὶ οὐρανίωτες, other poets of θεοὶ (οἱ) οὐράνιοι. They are also formulaically described as dwelling in heaven, αἰθέρι ναίων, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, etc. They can be paired with the gods below: θεοὺς τοὺς τ' οὐρανίδας τοὺς θ' ὑπὸ γαῖαν, etc.²³ Similarly in Akkadian the Igigi and Anunnaki may be distinguished as 'gods of heaven' and 'gods of the earth' (i.e. the underworld), or combined as 'gods of heaven and earth'. We hear also of the gods 'who dwell in heaven' and/or 'in the earth'.²⁴ 'The gods of heaven' and 'the

gods of earth' appear also in Hittite; there an alternative designation is 'upper' and 'lower' gods (*siunes sarrazes/katteres*), as in Greek it is possible to speak of οἱ ἄνω and οἱ κάτω (or *vēprepoi*) θεοί.²⁵ In Hittite poetry there is a burial formula, 'put him in a hole of the gods of the earth'.²⁶ 'The gods of heaven and (the gods) of earth' remained a standard expression in the north-west Semitic area in the eighth and seventh centuries. It occurs in Aramaic on the stele of King Zakkur of Hamath (c. 780), and in a letter from a Phoenician king to the Pharaoh (perhaps c. 605).²⁷ In the Old Testament the traditional theology is naturally much revised, but Yahweh is still celebrated as 'ʾĒl ʾAttānāyīm, 'the god of heaven'.²⁸

The minor deities whose place is neither in heaven nor in the underworld but on the earth's surface need not detain us. The main category of these in the Greek pantheon, the Nymphs, seem to have no counterparts in the ancient Near East: their pedigree is rather Indo-European, or at least European. The freelance ghouls Gello, Lamia, and the *nylla* have been dealt with in another context (pp. 58 f.). We will note in passing that the sportive Satyrs and Sileni have a certain similarity to the sub-human, hairy demons known to the Hebrews as *šē'irim* (sing. *šē'ir*) and to the Arabs as *djinn*s. These uncouth creatures are imagined as living in the wild among the animals, and as haunting deserted ruins; *Isidore* pictures them dancing or capering there.²⁹

Besides the gods of the present regime there are those of the past. *Zeus*, *Teshub*, *Marduk*, have not always been king; they achieved this position by defeating predecessors who now count for nothing. There is also a collectivity of former gods, now confined somewhere below the earth. They are known to Greek myth as the Titans; Hesiod calls them precisely 'the former gods', *prōteroi* θεοί. They have the same name in Hittite, *karuilies siunes*, the Former Gods. In Babylonian theology they are the 'dead gods', the *Dingiruggû* (or *Uggû*). We shall study them in more detail in the chapter devoted to Hesiod.

¹⁸ Il. 15. 187–93. Cf. also *Hymn. Dem.* 86, Alcman 65?, Orph. fr. 56 (end), Call. *Hymn.* 1. 60–5 (criticizing Homer), fr. 119 2, *Supp. Hell.* 990, sch. A.R. 1. 308b, Apollod. 1. 2. 1. 4.

¹⁹ *Atr.* 1. 11–16; Burkert (1992), 90 f.

²⁰ Lines 11–13, trs. Shaffer: 'When An had taken the heavens for himself, / When Enlil had taken the earth for himself / And had given it to Ereshkigal in the underworld as a (wedding) gift'.

²¹ Hoffner, 13 f. § 30–2.

²² Oppenheim (1977), 208. Cf. Joshua's division of land by lot among the tribes of Israel (Josh. 18. 8 ff.), and Noah's division of the earth by lot among his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Jub. 8. 10 ff.).

²³ Eur. *Hec.* 146, cf. Aesch. *Supp.* 25, Ag. 89, Eur. fr. 912. 6 ff.

²⁴ *En. el.* VI 69, 100, 141, Seux, 172, *CPLM* no. 34. 74, *ANET* 534, etc.; Tallqvist (1938), 13,

14, 90–2.

²⁵ *Hymn to the Sun-god*, *CTH* 372 i. 32 f. (H. G. Güterbock, *JAOS* 78, 1958, 240; *TUAT* ii. 197); V. Haas, *Or.* N.S. 45, 1976, 205 f.; Aesch. *Pers.* 622, *Cho.* 165, *Soph. Ant.* 1070–3, al.

²⁶ *KTU* 1. 5 v 5, 6 i 17, 19 iii 6, 35.

²⁷ *KAI* 202 B 25 f., 266. 1 f. (*SSI* ii 12, 113).

²⁸ Ps. 136. 26. Similarly in the Persian court correspondence recorded in Ezra, 5. 12, 6. 9 f., 7. 12, 21, 23 (Aram. *ʾēlāh šmayyā*).

²⁹ Isa. 13. 21, 34. 14. They are apparently recipients of pagan cult in Lev. 17. 7, 2 Ki. 23. 8, 2 Chr. 11. 15. Cf. Robertson Smith, 119–22. It seems scarcely possible to connect the word *satyros* with *šē'ir*. Perhaps the savage in the Phoenician tale described on p. 100 was a member of the class.

Places of resort

The gods of the upper world habitually meet in assembly, presided over by their chief, and take decisions there. This familiar Homeric motif is equally at home in Sumero-Akkadian, Hurro-Hittite, and Canaanite literature. But whereas in Greece it is purely literary and has no basis in ordinary religious ideas, in the Near East the Assembly of the Gods is referred to also in ritual texts and royal inscriptions, and evidently enjoyed official recognition. Its Greek location on the northern mountain of Olympus seems to be modelled on Canaanite myth. In Ugaritic epic the gods' meeting-place is on a mountain *Li* (vocalization unknown). We do not know where it was, but it was probably associated with El's home 'at the sources of the rivers, amid the springs of the two seas', that is, somewhere in the mountains of eastern Anatolia. A Hebrew prophet makes Lucifer declare, 'I will sit on the mountain of convocation in the recesses of the north'.³⁰

The gods are represented as visiting and travelling on the earth quite frequently. Apart from their various dealings with humankind, which we shall consider presently, they have individual residences to which they repair and where they occasionally receive one another. These may be cult centres, like Apollo's temple at Delphi or Enki's at Eridu, or they may be mansions inaccessible to man, like Poseidon's submarine palace at Aigai and El's at the source of the rivers.³¹ The gods' houses are sometimes said to be of gold, or of gold, silver, and precious stones.³² They sit on gold thrones, and they drink from gold cups.³³ To go on journeys they equip their animals with gold harnesses.³⁴ At night they go to their bedchambers and sleep.³⁵

The gods travel great distances speedily. Sometimes they fly through the air like birds; sometimes they ride over land and sea in a chariot.³⁶

³⁰ KTU 1. 2 v 20; cf. M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, Leiden 1955, 68 f.; Isa. 14. 13.

³¹ *R* 13. 21 f., cf. Hes. *Th.* 933; KTU 1. 4 iv 21 f., al.

³² *R* 4. 2, 13. 21 f., Hes. *Th.* 933, Sapph. 127, Pind. *Nem.* 10. 88, *Isth.* 3/4. 78; *Enki's Journey to Nippur*, Bottéro-Kramer, 142; M. Weippert, *ZAW* 84, 1972, 84 (Foster, 712); KTU 1. 4 v 18 f., 33. 5.

³³ Thrones. *R* 8. 442, 14. 238; χρυσόθρονος of Hera, Artemis, etc.; Seux, 469 = TUAT ii. 720 = Foster, 149 (diviner's prayer), 'O Shamash, lord of judgment, O Adad, lord of prayers and divination, seated on thrones of gold, dining from a tray of lapis lazuli'; Foster, 151, 'the great gods who sit on thrones of gold'. Cups. *R* 4. 3, *Hymn. Ap.* 10; KTU i. 4 iv 37, vi 59, 5 iv 16.

³⁴ *R* 5. 722-31; KTU 1. 4 iv 10 f.; *GHg.* VI i 10 f. A Neo-Babylonian text describes the accoutrements of the Sun-god's chariot kept at Sippar, with its gold reins and its other equipment of silver and of bronze: T. G. Pinches, *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 60, 1928, 132 f.

³⁵ *R* 1. 606, 24. 677; Old Babylonian prayer to the Gods of the Night, *ANET* 391 = Seux, 475 f. = TUAT ii. 718 f. = Foster, 146; W. Heimpel, *JCS* 38, 1986, 128.

³⁶ Flying: *R* 13. 62, *Qd.* 1. 320, etc.; Hoffner, 70 § 5; KTU i. 10 ii 10 (cf. Caquot-Sznycer,

but even as pedestrians they can cover much ground in a short time. Chelidon crosses the sea from Samothrace to Aigai in four giant strides; Hera hops from peak to peak to reach Lemnos from Olympus; Apollo can get from Delphi to Thessaly with a single step.³⁷ The motif is anticipated in Ugaritic and Hittite mythical narratives. In the Baal epic the goddess Anat announces her intention of going without delay to visit El, the father of the gods:

I leave Ugar for the most distant of the gods,
and Inbab for the most distant of the spirits—
two footfalls below the earth's springs,
three loping strides.

The divine smith Kothar uses the same expression in responding with alacrity to a summons from El.³⁸ In the Hittite *Song of Silver*, two gods go on a journey together: 'They went forth, they made the journey *1-once*.' The adverb, formed from the numeral 1, normally means 'once'; in this phrase it is understood to mean 'at one go'. It appears with the same verb in several other passages of the mythological texts.³⁹

Some divine attributes

Occasionally Greek poets describe how the presence of divinity was made manifest by an aura of brilliant radiance. In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* the goddess, on arriving at Keleos' house, appears so tall as to fill the height of the room, and she 'filled the doorway with a divine brightness'. Later, when she reveals herself in her true form, 'the light shone far from the goddess's immortal body ... the house was filled with a brilliance as of lightning'. When Apollo first came to Delphi and entered his inner sanctum, he made a flame flare within it that filled the whole of Crisa with light. In each case the apparition fills the bystanders not with joy but with terror.⁴⁰ We can compare the fearsome radiance, variously called *melammu*, *namrîrû*, *namurratu*, *rašubbatu*, and *lilummatu*, that characterizes Mesopotamian gods, kings, and temples. For example, when Anzu faces Ninurta in battle, his *melammu* covers the

R 13, 18 iv 21, 31 f. Chariots: *R* 5. 722 ff., 13. 23 ff.; KTU i. 20 B 3 ff., 22 A 22 ff. (Caquot-Sznycer, 478, 473).

³⁷ *R* 13. 20 f., 14. 225-30; Pind. *Pyth.* 3. 43. Cf. *R* 5. 770-2, where one bound of Hera's horses takes them as far as a man on a cliff-top can see to the misty horizon.

³⁸ KTU 1. 3 iv 33-6; 1. 1 iii 20. For 'footfalls' and 'loping strides' I follow the interpretation of Caquot-Sznycer, which seems philologically well founded.

³⁹ Hoffner, 47, 50, 54, 58, 66.

⁴⁰ *Hymn. Dem.* 189, 278-80, *Hymn. Ap.* 440-5; cf. [Hes.] *Sc.* 70 f.

mountain.⁴¹ We may also recall 'the glory of the Lord' (*k'bôd Yahweh*) which was revealed to Moses, and the appearance of which was 'as a devouring fire on the mountain-top in the eyes of the sons of Israel'.⁴²

The supreme god reigns from on high, and is indeed the highest; Zeus is formulaically ὕπατος, ὕψιστος, ὑψιμέδων; he exists ὑπόθι (II. 10. 16), he has the high bench (ὕψιζυγος). In Aeschylus' words, 'he does not pay homage to the power of anyone sitting above him';⁴³ Marduk, similarly, 'shall sit high up (*šaqiš*) in the house of prayer'; he is 'uniquely high' (*šaqū ēdiššišu*), 'highest of the gods' (*šaqū ilāni*).⁴⁴ At Ugarit Baal had the name 'ly (*ʿeliyu*), 'the High One', and the Hebrew God likewise has the titles 'ēlī, (ʿĒl) 'elyōn, rām, with the same meaning.⁴⁵ He is also 'seated on high', 'seated in the heavens', 'established on high'.⁴⁶

Zeus was, of course, originally an Indo-European deity. But his Indo-European identity was as the god of the bright sky, not the god of weather and storms. Among other branches of the Indo-European peoples we find him distinct from storm-gods such as the Indian Indra, the Balto-Slavic Perkunas or Perun, and the Germanic Thor. In Greek he has taken over the functions of a storm-god. We cannot say whether it was a native or a foreign storm-god; but the Homeric epithets and attributes relating to this role of Zeus indicate some assimilation to Near Eastern images of the god of storms.

Firstly, he is ὑψιβρεμέτης, the one who roars from on high like some large animal. In a Sumerian hymn the storm-god Iškur is addressed as

Lion(?) of heaven; noble bull ...
At your roar the great mountain Enlil lowers his head,
At your bellow Ninlil trembles.⁴⁷

The thundercloud was mythically represented as the great divine bird Im-dugud, like an eagle but with a lion's head, presumably for the 'roar' of the thunder. A Hebrew prophet is commanded to announce that the Lord in his wrath 'will roar from on high ... he will roar greatly at his

sheepfold'.⁴⁸ Again the image seems to be of a roaring lion; the verb employed is used of lions elsewhere.

Zeus is also the Lightner (ἀστεροπητής) and the Cloud-gatherer (νεφέληγερέτης). The north Semitic weather-god Adad is celebrated in Akkadian hymns both as *bēl birqi* 'lord of lightning' and as *šākin upē* or *urpall* or *erpēti*, 'establisher of clouds'.⁴⁹

Another epithet of Zeus which probably has to do with his role as storm-god is αἰγίοχος, which for linguistic reasons cannot mean 'aegis-bearing' but should mean 'riding on a goat'. Comparative evidence from northern Europe suggests that the Indo-European sky- or thunder-god's 'goat' was in fact a bird, a species of snipe, whose vibrating tail-feathers produce a bleating noise as it dives through the air, this being taken as a sign of coming storm. Just as the sparrows whose flight is an omen of hivo are represented by Sappho as drawing Aphrodite's chariot, so poets may once have imagined the 'goat' bird as carrying the storm-god or drawing his chariot.⁵⁰ This imagery would bring us once more into contact with Near Eastern tradition. In the hymn to Iškur quoted above, the god is hailed as 'lord who rides the storm', and Enlil is heard telling him 'Harness the winds before you, let the seven winds be harnessed for you like a team ... let your minister Lightning go before you.' In one of the later texts of *Atrahasis*, when the coming of the Flood is described, Adad 'rode on the four winds, his asses'. Elsewhere he has the titles 'rider of the wind', 'rider of the storm' (*rākib ūmilšārī*), while in *Enūma eliš* Marduk rides on the chariot of the storm (*ḫarkabat ūmi*) in his battle against Tiamat.⁵¹ In the similar context of Teššub's attack on Ullikummi in the Hittite myth, the god mounts a car drawn by two bulls to attack the stone monster with rain, winds, and lightning.⁵² In Ugaritic poetry Baal is regularly called *rkb ʿrpt*, 'the rider of the clouds'.⁵³ So too in Hebrew: Yahweh is called 'the one who makes the rain-clouds his chariot, who walks on the wings of the wind'.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Jer. 25. 30, cf. Amos 1. 2, Joel 3. 16.

⁴⁹ Seux, 305-7, 311, = Foster, 545-8; Tallqvist (1938), 42, 224; M. Weinfeld, *JANES* 5, 1973, 42 f.

⁵⁰ See West (1978), 366-8. As noted there, some in antiquity connected Zeus' aegis with αἰγίς in the sense of 'storm-wind', and one could at a pinch explain αἰγίοχος as for *αἰγιδί-φοχος 'riding on the storm-wind'.

⁵¹ *Atr.* U rev. 5 (Lambert-Millard, 122); Tallqvist (1938), 175; *En. el.* II 151, IV 50.

⁵² *Ullikummi* II B iii.

⁵³ *KTU* 1. 2 iv 8, 3 ii 40, 4 iii 11, 18, v 60, 5 ii 7, 19 i 43, 92. 37.

⁵⁴ Ps. 104. 3, cf. 68. 5(4) (cj.), 18. 11 = 2 Sam. 22. 11, Isa. 19. 1, 66. 15. On all this cf. Weinfeld (as n. 49), 422-5. E. Ullendorff (as n. 13), 243 f., argues that *rkb* in these Ugaritic and Hebrew phrases has the primary sense of 'gather' (from which would derive the senses 'harness', 'ride'), so that *rkb ʿrpt* = 'cloud-gatherer', an exact counterpart to νεφέληγερέτης.

⁴¹ *Anzu* (SBV) II 37; cf. *En. el.* I 103, 138, IV 57, V 101; Elena Cassin, *La splendeur divine. Introduction à l'étude de la mentalité mésopotamienne*. Paris 1968.

⁴² Exod. 24. 17, cf. 40. 34-8, Lev. 9. 23 f., Ezek. 1. 27 f., 10. 4, 43. 2; M. Weinfeld, *Tarbiz* 37, 1968, 116 f., 131 f.

⁴³ *Supp.* 597. See Fraenkel on Ag. 182 f.

⁴⁴ *En. el.* VII 109; Assurbanipal's acrostic hymn, *CPLM* no. 2 obv. 2, 41. For further references see Tallqvist (1938), 229 f.; cf. 17 s.vv. *elā, ullā, mulillā*.

⁴⁵ *KTU* 1. 16 iii 6, 8; Psalms often, cf. Gen. 14. 18-22, Isa. 14. 14, al.; M. Dahood, *Theological Studies* 14, 1953, 452-7.

⁴⁶ Ps. 113. 5, 123. 1, Isa. 33. 5, 57. 15.

⁴⁷ Trs. Kramer in *ANET* 578; also in Falkenstein-von Soden, 81-3; *TUAT* ii. 649-52.

With his rainstorms and thunderbolts Zeus is said to 'lash' or 'scourge' his enemy Typhoeus.⁵⁵ But whatever the weather, those upon whom he inflicts suffering can be said to be struck or laid low by his scourge or goad (μάστιξ).⁵⁶ In Akkadian too the scourge (*qinnānu*) appears both as a metaphor for the storm-god's lashing rain or lightning bolts and more abstractly as a divine instrument of punishment and domination. Adad is celebrated as 'bearer of the shining whip, stirrer-up of the seas ... causer of the lightning flash', and again as 'causer of the lightning flash with his shining whip'.⁵⁷ But more generally,

O Shamash, the wrongdoer is struck as with a whip.

The righteous sufferer complains

The whip has beaten me, it is full of thorns;
the goad pierces me, the point is sharp.⁵⁸

Isaiah prophesies that

The Lord of Hosts will wield a scourge against them, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb.⁵⁹

THE GODS IN RELATION TO MANKIND

This last item has brought us down to the world of men, and hinted at how utterly we are at the gods' mercy. Theirs is the kingdom, the power and the glory; we live a life of toil, pain, short duration, and prospects that are ever uncertain.

It was not always so. Babylonian, Hebrew, and Greek mythology agree that there was a time when the gulf between the divine and the human condition was not as wide as it is now. People lived much longer, and in better conditions.⁶⁰ The gods mingled with them more freely and intervened more intimately in their affairs.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Hes. *Th.* 857, II. 2. 782.

⁵⁶ *Il.* 12. 37 Διὸς μάστιγι δαμέντες, 13. 812, Aesch. *Sept.* 608 πληγὰς Θεοῦ μάστιγι παγκοίνῃ δάμη, cf. *Ag.* 367 Διὸς πλαγάν, *PV* 682 μάστιγι θεῖαι; of Ares, *Ag.* 642.

⁵⁷ J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *Iraq* 24, 1962, 93, line 3 (inscribed statue of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud); E. Unger, *Reliefstele Adadniraris III aus Saba'a und Semiramis*, Constantinople 1916, line 5.

⁵⁸ *OECT* 6. 53 obv. 37 = *Seux*, 230; *Ludlul* II 100 f.; cf. *OECT* 6. 21b. 9-12; J. Böllenrucher, *Gebete und Hymnen an Nergal* (LSS I. 6), Leipzig 1904, no. 5, lines 45 f.

⁵⁹ Isa. 10. 26; cf. 28. 15, 18, 30. 31 f., Job 9. 34 (Krenkel, 28).

⁶⁰ See the discussion of Hesiod's *Myth of Ages* in chapter 6.

⁶¹ Cf. C. J. Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient Near East*, London 1948, 14-20.

Sexual relations between gods and mortals

For example, there were sexual relations between gods and mortal women, and in some cases between goddesses and mortal men. This led to—or rather, followed from—the existence of royal lines that claimed descent from a god. In Greek legend there were so many of these that the sixth-century compendium of genealogical tradition known as the *Catalogue of Women* or *Ehoiai*, attributed to Hesiod, had the unions of women with gods as its starting-point and recurring *Leitmotiv*. In the introductory verses the poet explained that these unions occurred because in those days gods and mortals used to feast and consort together.⁶² Because of their part-human, part-divine pedigree, the heroes descended from such liaisons were known as the 'half-gods', ἡμίθεοι. Sumero-Babylonian tradition makes a nicer fractional reckoning of the genetic balance: Gilgamesh, the son of the goddess Ninsun, is two-thirds divine and one-third mortal.⁶³

In Hebrew tradition we find a general statement comparable to that of pseudo-Hesiod. According to the famous (or infamous) sixth chapter of *Genesis* (1-4),

As humans began to grow numerous upon the humus, daughters were born to them. The gods⁶⁴ saw that the daughters of humans were attractive, and they took wives from whoever they chose ... The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also later—when the gods visited the daughters of humans and they bore children to them. These were the primeval warrior-heroes (*haggebōrīm* 'Mer mē'ōlām), men of renown.

The Nephilim (rendered in the Septuagint as γίγαντες) were men of enormous size and strength; some of their race were still to be found in parts of Canaan in the time of Moses.⁶⁵ The text strongly suggests that these giant heroes were the issue of the gods' unions with women. They were certainly understood to be so in later Jewish tradition.⁶⁶ We also hear of an early Israelite hero called Shamgar who was the son of the bellicose Canaanite goddess 'Anat.⁶⁷

There is, then, a general agreement between Hebrew and Greek myth on this, that there was on the earth in a former age a race of warrior

⁶² 'Hes.' fr. 1. 6 f.

⁶³ *Gilg.* I ii 1, IX ii 16.

⁶⁴ Literally 'sons of the gods' or 'of God'; cf. p. 97.

⁶⁵ Num. 13. 33, where a gloss identifies them as the sons of Anak; cf. 13. 28. The sons of Anak, or the Anakim, and a similar race of giants called Rephaim, are mentioned in Deut. 1. 28, 2. 11, 21, 3. 11, 9. 2, Josh. 11. 21 f., 12. 4, 13. 12, 14. 12, 15, Jdg. 1. 20, 2 Sam. 21. 16-22, Jer. 47. 5.

⁶⁶ *Jub.* 5. 1, 7. 21 f., *I Enoch* 7. 1 f., 15. 8 f.; Damascus Rule p. 84 Vermes, 4Q180 p. 261 V.

⁶⁷ Jdg. 3. 31, 5. 6 (Song of Deborah).

heroes, bigger and stronger than men are now, and that they arose from an intimacy of gods with mortal women which was characteristic of those times.

The loss of perpetual youth

Mortal nature, however, is irremediably stunted in comparison with the divine. We are doomed to old age and death, from which the gods are exempt. According to a Greek myth, we nearly did get the elixir of youth. Zeus gave it to certain persons as a reward for informing on Prometheus' theft of fire from heaven. They loaded it on a donkey and would have brought it back to mankind. But it was a hot summer day, and the donkey, dying for water, was persuaded by a snake that was guarding a spring to part with the elixir as the price of a drink. Consequently the snake has the ability to slough off its skin (its 'old age', as the Greeks called it) and renew its youth, while mankind does not.⁶⁸

This seems to be related, albeit not very closely, to a story embodied in the Gilgamesh epic. Gilgamesh has travelled to the ends of the earth to see Ut-napishtim. Ut-napishtim, disclosing a secret of the gods, shows him where to dive for the prickly plant that restores youth. Gilgamesh obtains it and sets out to take it home to Uruk, where he intends first to test it on a senior citizen and then to make use of it himself. But on the way he stops at a pool and takes a bathe in its cool water. While he is thus occupied, a snake steals the precious vegetable, and almost at once sheds its old skin.⁶⁹ There is no donkey in this version, and no negotiated exchange, but the similarity of the two stories in other respects—the rejuvenating substance is received as a gift somewhere outside the world of men, and is lost to a snake at a watering-place on the way back—points to a connection.⁷⁰

The knowledge of good and evil

Another thing that is withheld from mankind, but characteristic of divinity, is the knowledge of good and evil, or rather, the ability to distinguish them before it is too late. In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, when the goddess's plan to make Keleos' little boy immortal is interrupted by the mother's unwitting protest, she says:

⁶⁸ Nic. *Th.* 343–58 (with schol.), who calls it an ancient tale; Ael. *H.A.* 6. 51, who names Ibycus (*PMGF* 342), Sophocles (fr. 362 R.), and others as authors who referred to the story.

⁶⁹ *Glg.* XI 263–96.

⁷⁰ Cf. Burkert (1992), 123 f. Myths about how snakes instead of men got the secret of immortality are widely diffused; see Frazer, i. 66–8, 74–6. Cf. M. Davies, *Mus. Helv.* 44, 1987, 65–75.

Ignorant men, too dull to recognize
impending fortune either good or ill.⁷¹

The idea that God has the knowledge of good and evil which is hidden from unenlightened mortals also occurs in archaic elegy and lyric.

And no man as he toils knows whether in the end
his enterprise will turn out well or ill ...

We mortals have no knowledge, only vain belief;
the gods fix everything to suit themselves.⁷²

For a brief span we enjoy
youth's flowers, with no knowledge from the gods
of either ill or good.⁷³

Our minds are webbed about
with numberless errors. There's no way to discover
what's best for a man to attain, either now or in the end.⁷⁴

We find much the same outlook and sentiments in some Akkadian prayers and hymns.

Who is so careful that he has incurred no guilt?
People do not know their hidden []
What is good or bad, God is the one who reveals it.⁷⁵

Mankind is obtuse, it knows nothing.
Mankind, all of it that there is, what does it know?
Whether it has done wrong or right, it knows not at all.⁷⁶

Mankind, all of it that there is—
who apprehends anything on his own?
Who has not sinned, which man has not done wrong?
Who apprehends the way of God?⁷⁷

In the garden of Eden there grows 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil', whose fruit was forbidden to mankind. When Adam and Eve did eat of it, Yahweh Elohim was dismayed and exclaimed, 'There, the man has become like one of us (gods), to know good and evil.'⁷⁸ He then

⁷¹ *Hymn. Dem.* 256 f.

⁷² *Thgn.* 135 f., 141 f.; cf. 402–6, Sol. 13. 65–70.

⁷³ *Mimn.* 2. 3–5.

⁷⁴ *Pind. Ol.* 7. 24–6. Cf. also *Orph. fr.* 233 (sixth/fifth century?).

⁷⁵ Prayer to Marduk, apparently after an Old Babylonian original W. G. Lambert *A/O* 19, 1960, 57, lines 106–8 = Seux, 176, Foster, 522.

⁷⁶ Prayer to Any God (bilingual): Maul, 240, lines 29–31 = Seux, 142, Foster, 687.

⁷⁷ Ebeling (1953), 72, second text, 8–11.

⁷⁸ Gen. 3. 22, cf. 3. 5.

banished him from Eden, for fear that he might eat from the tree of life too and become immortal; presumably that would have put him completely on the gods' level. So now (it may be inferred) mankind is deprived of access to either tree. The Yahwist writer probably meant it to be understood that we have inherited (some) knowledge of good and evil from our first parents. But the presupposition of the story which he has adapted is that this knowledge belongs to the gods and is withheld from mankind.

Toil

It is a noticeable feature of the human condition that we have to work for our bread. According to both Greek and Near Eastern myth, this painful necessity was imposed upon us by the gods, or by the chief of the gods. The Babylonian poet of *Atrahasis* has it that in the beginning, before there was a human race, the gods 'were man' or 'were like man': they had to do all the work of digging canals and keeping them clear. Man was created to take over this work, to 'bear the yoke', to 'bear the load of the gods'. In the later epic *Erra and Ishum* the augmentation of human toil is synchronized with the Flood, which is here represented as having been caused by Marduk in anger at the human race:

The stations of the stars were changed, and I did not put them back in their places.

The underworld quaked; the furrow's yield became scanty, and awkward to rely on ever after.⁷⁹

The Yahwist writer of Genesis 3 puts the change before the Flood, at the time of Adam's disgrace. Adam had had some gardening to do in Eden (2. 15), but nothing heavy. But because he took what he should not have taken, what belonged to God, God was angry with him and laid a curse on the soil that had been so free with its gifts (3. 17-19):

In travail you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

Thorns and thistles it shall sprout for you, and you shall eat the greens of the field.

In the sweat of your cheeks you shall eat bread.

This is closer to the Greek myth as we have it in Hesiod than to *Atrahasis*. Hesiod, like the Yahwist, holds that originally the fruits of the earth grew in plenty of their own accord and could be garnered with minimal effort. But Zeus 'hid' them out of anger at having been tricked by Prometheus in the matter of the division of sacrificial meat. The

⁷⁹ *Erra* 1.134 f

effect of Prometheus' trick was that mankind got the best meat, the portion that properly belonged to the gods. That is why we have been condemned to till the earth so laboriously.⁸⁰

A heaven too high

The limitations set upon human potential and the unbridgeability of the divide between mankind and the gods are summed up in the axiom that it is futile for a mortal to try to reach heaven. In Greek this is a commonplace at least from the time of Alcman and Sappho:

Let no man fly up to heaven.

I do not think to touch the sky with my two arms(?)⁸¹

It was already so for the Sumerians:

A man, (even) the tallest, cannot reach heaven,
a man, (even) the widest, cannot cover the earth.⁸²

So too in the Gilgamesh epic, where Gilgamesh says to Enkidu

Who, my friend, can go up to heaven?
The gods dwell with Shamash for ever,
but as for man, his days are numbered;
all his activity is just wind.⁸³

In myth, attempts by earthlings to intrude in heaven end in disaster. The Alloadai, Otus and Ephialtes, were a pair of brothers who grew rapidly to a colossal size. They set themselves to pile Pelion on Ossa, and both on Olympus, in order to climb up to heaven and fight the gods. If they had reached manhood, they would have done it, but Apollo saw to it that they died before growing whiskers.⁸⁴ As more than one scholar has pointed out, the story recalls the Hurrian myth of Ullikummi (above, p. 104). There the rapidly-growing giant is himself the tower of rock that threatens to reach heaven but is stopped in time; in the Greek myth,

⁸⁰ Hes. *Op.* 42-9, cf. 116-19; Virg. *Georg.* 1. 121-35 (with loftier motives for Jupiter)

⁸¹ Alcman 1. 16, Sappho 52; cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 10. 27, *Nem.* 6. 2-4, *Isth.* 7. 43-7, Rhian 1. 15

⁸² *Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living* A 28 f. (trs. Tigay, 164), quoted in Akkadian in the 'Prologue of Pessimism', BWL 148. 83 f. Similarly in a Sumerian proverb collection: B. Alster, *Studies in Sumerian Proverbs*, 86-9 (Tigay, 165); cf. W. W. Hallo in Abusch, 216. Inanna in a Sumerian hymn (Falkenstein-von Soden, 230) says 'the man who wants to climb to heaven I fasten to the earth'.

⁸³ These lines are preserved in the OBV, Y iv 5-8, but probably stood in some similar form also in the SBV, following II v 7.

⁸⁴ *Od.* 11. 305-20, cf. Hes. fr. 19-21, Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 88, fr. 162-3, Hyg. *Fab.* 28. Apollod. 1. 7.

characteristically, this fantastic element is toned down and humanized. The bodily measurements provided in the two narratives make a further point of contact. Otus and Ephialtes at *nine* years old were *nine* cubit wide and *nine* fathoms tall. Ullikummi attains a height of *nine* thousand leagues and a width of *nine* thousand leagues.⁸⁵

Then there was Bellerophon, who, as he had a flying horse, took it into his head to ride up to the heavenly mews and mix with the gods. They accepted the horse, but caused its presumptuous jockey to fall off on the way up and cripple himself.⁸⁶ Is there a distant echo here of the first flight of Etna? When he lost his nerve on the way up to heaven and asked to go home, the eagle threw him off his back so that he fell, but caught him again before he hit the ground.

On the other hand, we hear of certain individuals who found such favour with the powers above that they were taken up to heaven and never seen on earth again. In Greek mythology Tantalus and Ganymede come to mind in this connection, as well as various handsome young men carried off by Eos or Aphrodite. In the Old Testament we read of Enoch, who vanished after 365 years of virtuous life, 'for God took him', and of Elijah, who made a more spectacular exit in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire. According to a Sumerian tradition, one of the antediluvian sages, Utu-abzu, 'ascended to heaven'.⁸⁷ Such men were the exceptions that proved the rule.

The gods among us

From their vantage-point in heaven the gods can see what we do on earth. But sometimes a god will come down to observe our behaviour at close range, taking human form and going about incognito among us. This consideration works to deter public wrongdoing, and especially to

protect strangers from ill usage: who knows if the unfamiliar figure is not some deity in disguise? In Homer people reckon with this possibility almost as a matter of course, especially if the stranger is good-looking or otherwise impressive in appearance.⁸⁸ When Antinous hurls a footstool at Odysseus, the supposed beggar vagrant, his fellows reprove him:

What if he is some god from heaven?

Even gods, taking the likeness of strangers from elsewhere
and assuming every kind of aspect, go from one community to another,
monitoring men's unrighteous or orderly conduct.⁸⁹

Several Graeco-Roman myths relate how a god, or two or three gods together, take to the road as travellers and receive hospitality from someone who does not know what they are and who impresses them with his goodness and piety, or his lack of it. We may recall, for example, the stories of Hyrieus, Icarius, Lycaon, Macelo and Dexithea, Baucis and Philemon. We cannot definitely trace most of these further back than the Hellenistic period, but Lycaon's entertainment of Zeus is attested for 'Hesiod', and it may be that a myth of this type lies behind Homer's allusion to Axylus, the affluent man who gave his hospitality freely to all comers and who was 'dear to the gods'.⁹⁰

In the introduction to a Sumerian narrative poem we read that

Holy Inanna decided to go down to earth:
to distinguish the wicked and the righteous,
to test men's hearts in the land,
to separate the true from the false, she decided to go down.⁹¹

The story of Job begins with an assembly of the gods (*b'ne hā 'ēlōhîm*), presided over by Yahweh. 'The Adversary' is there as one of the company; he has just come from 'roving on the earth, and going about on it', observing the character of individuals.⁹²

In more orthodox parts of the Old Testament the lesser divinities surrounding Yahweh are reduced to emissaries and agents of his will, his 'messengers' (*mal'ākām*, ἄγγελοι, the so-called 'angels'), but this shift does not always succeed in concealing their originally independent

⁸⁵ Ullikummi III 120 f. (§ 43), cf. m 14 (§ 57); F. Vian in *Éléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne* (Colloque de Strasbourg, 22-24 mai 1958), Paris 1960, 36; J. Harmatta, *Acta Antiqua* 16, 1968, 61-76. There may also be an Indo-European component in the myth: in the *Rgveda* Indra strikes down with thunderbolts a demon Rauhīṇa (2. 12. 2) or the black aborigine Dasyus (8. 14. 14) when they attempt to climb to heaven by magic arts, and in Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning* (15) it is explained that the Frost Giants and Mountain Giants would climb to heaven up the Rainbow Bridge if the way were not barred by fire. One might also refer to the Yahwist's story of the tower of Babel (Babylon), Gen. 11. 1-9, cf. *Jub.* 10. 18-27. On the historical background of this cf. W. von Soden, *UF* 3, 1971, 263-63; on this and parallel myths from other lands cf. Frazer, i. 362-87. The Hurrian *Song of Emancipation* refers to a builder who builds a tower that reaches to heaven: E. Neu, *Abh. Mainz* 1988(3), 26.

⁸⁶ Pind. *Ol.* 13. 91 f. with sch., *Isth.* 7. 44-7; cf. Hes. *Th.* 284-6, *Il.* 6. 200-2 with sch. D on 6. 155 = Asclep. Trag. *FGH Hist* 12 F 13; fragments of Euripides' *Bellerophon*.

⁸⁷ Gen. 5. 24; 2 Ks. 2. 1-11; R. Borger, *JNES* 33, 1974, 192. For more on Enoch's fate see *Jub.* 4. 23 f.: he was settled in Eden, and there he keeps record of all the bad deeds of mankind till the day of judgment.

⁸⁸ *Il.* 5. 177, 6. 128, *Od.* 6. 149, 16. 183, *Hymn. Aphr.* 92, *Hymn. Hom.* 7. 17.

⁸⁹ *Od.* 17. 484-7. Differently Hes. *Op.* 249-55, where the divinē monitors, three (or thirty) thousand in number, roam the earth invisibly.

⁹⁰ 'Hes.' fr. 163; *Il.* 6. 14. On the motif cf. D. Flückiger-Guggenheim, *Göttliche Gäste. Die Hinkunft von Göttern und Heroen in der griechischen Mythologie*, Bern 1984; A. S. Hollis, *Callimachus. Hecale*, Oxford 1990, 341-54.

⁹¹ *Inanna and Šukaletuda* 5-8, in Bottéro-Kramer, 257.

⁹² *Job* 1. 6-8, cf. 2. 1-3.

status. Embedded in the saga of Abraham we find a story which strikingly parallels the Greek myths of hospitality to gods, and which posed something of a problem to the redactor with its polytheistic content. Three immortals come to Abraham's tent. The narrator identifies one of them as Yahweh and the other two as Messengers; but one does not employ messengers and then travel with them. Abraham welcomes the three 'men', as they appear to him, provides them with an excellent dinner, and supplies all their other wants. His reward is that Sarah, his childless, elderly wife, is at last blessed with a son. The gods continue on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah. Yahweh wishes to observe the conduct of the people there and to see whether the bad reports he has had of them are justified. At Sodom the Messengers are received by another perfect host, Lot. He in turn gets his reward, in the form of advance warning of the catastrophe which is about to engulf the naughty pair of towns.⁹³

Divine wrath

The idea that many kinds of public or personal disaster might be traced to the anger or hatred of a god, or the gods, was commonplace in Archaic Greece and the Near East (except Egypt).⁹⁴ Standard grounds for divine displeasure include:

1. An insult offered to the god, or a boast or challenge indicating that the mortal fails to appreciate the god's complete superiority. This is a recurrent motif in Greek myth. Niobe incurs Artemis' wrath by boasting how many more children she has borne; the daughters of Proitos incur Hera's by their derogatory remarks about her unimpressive old wooden statue; Salmoneus incurs Zeus' by claiming to produce thunder and lightning; Lycurgus and Pentheus provoke Dionysus' by persecuting and belittling him. Gilgamesh infuriates Ishtar by rejecting her offer of marriage and casting in her teeth the bad things she has done to her previous lovers. Aqhat in the Ugaritic epic angers 'Anat by refusing to give her his bow, which she covets, and by doubting her ability as a female to make effective use of it. The Philistines incur Yahweh's wrath by capturing his portable shrine, the ark of the covenant, and dedicating it as an offering in the temple of Dagon.⁹⁵

⁹³ Gen 18-19, 29 + 21, 1-7; compared with the Greek myths by Dornseiff, 232. Cf. Gordon (1962), 235.

⁹⁴ For an extended treatment of the subject see Considine (1969). That the motif of divine hatred was common to Greece and Israel was already noted by Bogan, 401, referring to such passages as *Od.* 4, 756, 19-364, *Deut.* 1, 27, *Mal.* 1, 3.

⁹⁵ *Gilg.* VI ii 22-iii; *KTU* 1, 17 vi 33 ff.; 1 *Sam.* 5; Considine, 88 ff.

2. Neglect of sacrifices or other cultic observances. When the Achaeans are smitten with a plague, the layman's first guess is that Apollo is angry because of inadequate offerings. Failure to sacrifice to the gods, or to a particular deity, is given as the reason for the ravaging of Oeneus' orchards and vineyards by the Calydonian Boar, for Menelaus' detention in Egypt by adverse winds, for the extirpation of Hesiod's Silver Race, and for the marital disasters of Tyndareos' daughters.⁹⁶ Similarly we read in the Hittite story of the hunter Kessi that he was so besotted with his wife's charms that he left off providing the gods with food offerings and libations. The gods were angry and hid all the game from him so that he caught nothing for months on end.⁹⁷ In Hittite omen texts which record investigations into causes of divine anger, defective offerings and omission of festivals are prominent among the possible explanations that are tested out by divinatory procedures.⁹⁸ Cancellation of the offerings that had anciently been made to the river Mala was established by Mursili II as one factor behind the plague that was rampant in his country. He declares that he himself has celebrated the festivals of all the gods and never preferred one temple to another so as to give any god ground for resentment.⁹⁹

3. The breaking of oaths sworn by the gods. When Pandarus' arrow-shot at Menelaus violates the truce between Achaeans and Trojans, Agamemnon prophesies that Zeus will be angry at the breach of faith and sooner or later bring about the defeat of Troy.¹⁰⁰ It is a basic premise of the Assyrian Tukulti-Ninurta epic that the Kassite king Kaštiliaš had angered the gods by his treaty-breaking and so doomed his kingdom. Mursili in his reflections on the causes of the plague found that one of them was his father's treacherous breach of a treaty with Egypt. The Israelites were inhibited from killing the Gibeonites, who had tricked them into making a treaty, by the fear that '(divine) wrath will be upon us because of the oath we swore to them'.¹⁰¹ The oath itself is sometimes regarded as a vindictive agent which pursues and punishes the perjurer. Hesiod and others treat Horkos as a god with this propensity. He 'does great harm' to those who swear false; he 'keeps pace with' crooked judgments, as a pursuer who cannot be shaken off, he has a son who is quick to go after the perjurer until he seizes and destroys his whole

⁹⁶ *Il.* 1, 65, cf. 5, 178; 9, 536; *Od.* 4, 352; *Hes. Op.* 138 f.; fr. 176.

⁹⁷ J. Friedrich, *ZA* 49, 1950, 234 f., Hoffner, 67; Considine, 113.

⁹⁸ E.g. *ANET* 497 f.

⁹⁹ *ANET* 394 f. (*CTH* 378).

¹⁰⁰ *Il.* 4, 155-68.

¹⁰¹ *ANET* 395 § 4 f.; *Josh.* 9, 20; Considine, 106.

house.¹⁰² A similarly active role is attributed to the oath in Akkadian. It can be personified as a demon; it can be said to 'get to' someone, or to 'have him seized'. In the Tukulti-Ninurta epic the worried Kaštiliash reflects that 'the oath of Shamash harasses(?) me, it holds me by the hem'.¹⁰³ In Hittite treaties the imprecations upon the violator include 'let the oaths of the gods pursue' him (*parheskandu*), or 'destroy' him (*harninkandu*).¹⁰⁴

4. Public failure to uphold ethical norms, maladministration of justice, or misrule by the king. This is a prominent theme in the *Works and Days*. In lines 238–47 Hesiod enumerates the punishments and tribulations that Zeus sends upon a community that is given to unrighteousness. Homer mentions rainstorms and floods as a response from Zeus 'when he is angry with men who make and enforce crooked judgments in the assembly-place'. Hammurabi in the epilogue to his law-code expects the gods to be angry with and to visit with devastating punishment any king, governor, or administrator who annuls his enactments, distorts his words, or changes his designs. Later Akkadian texts speak of Shamash's displeasure at unscrupulous judges who take bribes, and of the various afflictions that the gods will bring upon a king who does not heed justice and who rules corruptly. Yahweh's ordinances include justice and impartiality in its administration, and they are backed up with threats of divine sanctions against transgressors.¹⁰⁵

5. Sometimes the god's anger is evident but the reason for it remains obscure. In such a case, if the calamity is past, people may just say resignedly 'The god was angry with us'. If it is continuing over a prolonged period, they will consult diviners or an oracle to try to discover the cause of the wrath and the measures that may allay it. Calchas is consulted in such a situation in the *Iliad* and Proteus in the *Odyssey*. It is a recurrent pattern in later Greek legends, where the Delphic oracle usually takes the place of the local diviner. The use of divination in similar circumstances in the Near East has been mentioned in chapter 1. Mursili's 'plague prayers' provide a particularly apt parallel. We also have Hittite omen texts as mentioned above, recording

¹⁰² Hes. *Th.* 231, cf. *Op.* 804; *Op.* 219, cf. Aeschin. *Ctes.* 233, Babr. 50. 17; oracle in Hdt. 6. 86y 2.

¹⁰³ *AHW* s.vv. *māmītum* 4, *kašadu* G 6d, *šabātu* G 4b; *Tuk.-Nin.* A obv. iii 29' (Foster, 219).

¹⁰⁴ V. Korošec, *Hethitische Staatsverträge*, Leipzig 1931, 97 and nn. 8–10; A. Goetze, *Die Annalen des Mursiliš*, 192 f. = *KBo* II 5 iv 12–16, 'Because [the people of] Kalasma were under oath to me and had broken the oath and declared war, the gods of the oath showed their power, and the gods [of the oath] seized them.'

¹⁰⁵ *Il.* 16. 384–92; Hammurabi xlix 18 ff. (*ANET* 179); *Hymn to Shamash* 97–102 (*ANET* 388, *BWL* 132 f., Seux, 57 f., Foster, 540); 'Advice to a Prince' (*BWL* 112 f., *TUAT* iii 171–3, Foster, 760–2); *Exod.* 23. 6–9, *Lev.* 19. 15 + 26. 14–39, *Deut.* 16. 18–20 + 28. 15–68, cf. *Isa.* 10. 1–4.

inquiries into the causes of the god's anger. In Akkadian there are the many penitential prayers addressed to a god by an individual who is convinced that the deity is angry with him but cannot understand why.¹⁰⁶

Calamities interpreted as manifestations of divine wrath include plague,¹⁰⁷ drought or blight leading to famine,¹⁰⁸ storms and floods,¹⁰⁹ and defeat in war.¹¹⁰ It is understood that God's punishment does not have the pinpoint accuracy of a 'surgical strike': the guilty will be hit, certainly, but innocent folk may suffer at the same time. In particular, a whole people often suffers for the sins of its ruler.

Often a whole community together suffers in consequence of a bad man who does wrong and contrives evil.¹¹¹

If you rebel against Yahweh today, he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow ... Did not Achan the son of Zerah break faith in regard to the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel?¹¹²

Against the oath-breaker Kaštiliash the gods of heaven and earth []; they were [angry] with the king, the land, and the people [].¹¹³

If anyone arouses the anger of a god, does the god take revenge on him alone? Does he not take revenge on his wife, his children, his descendants, his kin, his slaves and slave-girls, his cattle and sheep together with his crop, and will utterly destroy him?¹¹⁴

This list of targets has a remarkably close parallel in pseudo-Hesiod's account of how Zeus visited his wrath on the people of the insolent Salmoneus:

¹⁰⁶ Cf. p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Hes. *Op.* 243, *Il.* 1. 64, *Soph. O.T.*, etc.; *Atr.* 1360 ff.; Mursili's plague prayers; *Gen.* 12. 17, *Exod.* 9. 13, *Lev.* 26. 25, *Num.* 11. 33, 14. 12, 25. 3–9, *Deut.* 28. 58–62, 1 *Sam.* 5. 6–6. 18, 2 *Sam.* 24. 13–25.

¹⁰⁸ Hes. *Op.* 242 f., *Hymn. Dem.* 305–11, 349–54, 467–73, Aesch. *Eum.* 780–7, 800–3; *Atr.* II 1 n ff., *Gilg.* XI 184; *ANET* 126 f. = Hoffner, 15 no. 2(1) § 3–5, cf. 20–1 no. 3 § 3–5; *Deut.* 11. 16 f., 29. 22–4; *Consideine*, 116–18.

¹⁰⁹ *Il.* 16. 384–92; *ANET* 127 = Hoffner, 20 no. 2(3) § 3; 2 *Sam.* 22. 7–16; *Consideine*, 119 f. For the myth of the great Flood see chapter 9.

¹¹⁰ Hes. *Op.* 246, *Il.* 1. 407–12, 21. 522; 'Advice to a Prince' (as n. 105), 11–13; *Tuk.-Nin.*; circular dream concerning Assurbanipal, *ANET* 451. 75; Moabite stone, *ANET* 320 = *SSI* i 74–6, 4–6 (then the king of Israel oppressed Moab for many a day, because Kemosh [the god of Moab] was angry with his land'; *Lev.* 26. 16 f., 25, *Deut.* 28. 47–57, *Jdg.* 3. 7 f., 4. 1 f., 10. 6 f. 1 *Sam.* 28. 17–19, *Isa.* 10. 5 f., etc.

¹¹¹ Hes. *Op.* 240 f.

¹¹² *Josh.* 22. 18, 20.

¹¹³ *Tuk.-Nin.* i B 33' f.

¹¹⁴ Hittite instructions for temple officials, *KUB* xiii 4 i 34 = *ANET* 208 (*CTH* 264); cf. Mursili's prayer *KUB* xxiv. 3 ii 54–9 (Gurney [1940], 30; *ANET* 396; *CTH* 376).

He struck them with thunder and the smoking bolt.
 Thus he punished [the people for the transgression of their king;
] his sons, his wife, and his domestics,
 ci]ty and palace he caused to be w[ashed away] to nothing.¹¹⁵

As the gods' anger is so unpleasant for those against whom it is directed, it is prudent for mortals to fear them, and someone who always conducts himself piously and in accord with their preferences may be labelled 'God-fearing'. This concept is familiar to us from the Judeo-Christian tradition: 'The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord'.¹¹⁶ It is also Mesopotamian:

He who fears the gods is not slighted by [anyone].
 He who fears the Anunnaki extends [his days].¹¹⁷

I am Assurnasirpal, your miserable servant,
 reverent, fearful of your divinity ...
 son of Shamshi-Adad the king, who feared the great gods.¹¹⁸

In Greek we meet the idea several times in the *Odyssey*. Apart from the word θεοῦδής 'god-fearing', which occurs half a dozen times in that poem (and nowhere else in early Greek), we find, for example, the suitors condemned for the way they have behaved, 'neither fearing the gods who occupy the broad heaven, nor taking account of any human disapproval'.¹¹⁹ Theognis counsels his friend:

Cyrnus, respect the gods and fear them. This is what
 restrains a man from impious word and deed.¹²⁰

Divine favour

On the other hand, the gods are the source of great benefits to mankind. In the past they have given us gifts such as agriculture and useful arts and

...¹²¹ They have granted lands to favoured peoples: the king of Udm in the Keret epic claims that his city was the gift of El, Yahweh gave a man to the Hebrews, and Tyrtaeus states that 'Zeus himself has given a city to the descendants of Heracles'.¹²² Gods have even built or settled certain cities with their own hands.¹²³

Whether they built them or not, some gods have particular cities that they love and protect. When they desert the city, or their images are carried off from it, the protection is gone and the city falls to its enemies. As long as a god is on a people's side, he or she stands beside them in battle and helps them towards victory. (See pp. 209–11.)

Within society there are certain classes of person who are held to enjoy special divine favour or protection. One is the king, whose authority is derived from the gods; kingship will be considered more fully below. Others are the weak and exposed, such as the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, whose position would be parlous indeed but for the doctrine that anyone taking advantage of them would incur the gods' anger.

It is the same if a man does wrong by a suppliant or a visitor ...
 or if in his folly he wrongs someone's orphan children ...
 With that man Zeus himself is indignant, and in the end
 he imposes a harsh return for his unrighteous actions.¹²⁴

Divine protection of orphans and widows was already an established notion in third-millennium Sumer.¹²⁵ In first-millennium hymns to Marduk we read:

'The wronged and 'slaughtered', you dispense their justice daily;
 you set aright the homeless girl, the widow, the wretched and harassed.

¹²¹ Agriculture: Greek myths of Demeter's gift to Triptolemus, Dionysus' to Icarius, Sumerian 'Fattle and Grain' poem (Kramer [1958], 164–6); Tigay, 204 f. Other arts: given by Hephaestus and Athena (*Hymn. Hom.* 20) or by Prometheus (*PV* 442–506: carpentry, building, astronomy, arithmetic, writing, domestication of draught animals, shipping, medicine, divination, mining), given by Inki to Inanna and brought by her to Uruk (*Enki and Inanna* 317–33 in S. N. Kramer and J. Maier, *Myths of Enki, the Crafty God*, New York & Oxford 1989, 51, 53, 62 f.; Bottéro–Kramer, 115, 247: carpentry, metal-working, writing, leather-working, fulling, building, reed-working).

¹²² *KTU* 1. 14 iii 31; Gen. 12. 7, etc.; Tyrt. 2. 12 f. According to Deut. 32. 8, 'when the High One heritaged the nations, when he separated the sons of man, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the numbers of the sons of the gods (v.l.: the sons of Israel)'. In other words, there is one god for each nation.

¹²³ Troy: *Il.* 21. 446, etc. Uruk: *Gilgamesh and Agga* 30–2, 107–9. Kish: *Etana* (SBV) I/A 1–

¹²⁴ Hes. *Op.* 327–34. For suppliants and strangers, protected by Zeus Hikesios and Xenios, cf. *Il.* 13. 624 f., *Od.* 9. 270 f., 13. 213, 14. 389, 16. 422, 21. 27 f., Thgn. 143 f., etc.

¹²⁵ Reforms of Urukagina of Lagash, see Kramer (1958), 89 f.; Hymn to Nanshe (Jacobsen, 125–42), 20–31, 159–67; Considine, 102.

¹¹⁵ 'Hes.' fr. 30. 18–21. Cf. also *Il.* 1. 410, Aesch. *Sept.* 597–608, Pind. *Pyth.* 3. 35–7; Gen. 18. 25.

¹¹⁶ Ps. 111. 10, cf. Job 28. 28, Prov. 1. 7, 10. 27; also Gen. 20. 11, 22. 12, 42. 18, Exod. 1. 17, 21. 18, 21. Lev. 19. 14, 32, Deut. 6. 2, 13, 24, 2 Sam. 23. 3, 2 Ki. 17. 32–9, Neh. 5. 9, 15, Job 1. 9, Ps. 119. 38, 63, 74, 79, etc.

¹¹⁷ *Counsels of Wisdom* 146 (*BWL* 104, cf. Lambert's note, 315).

¹¹⁸ Prayer of Assurnasirpal I (1050–1032) to Ishtar (W. von Soden, *AfO* 25, 1974/7, 38; Seux, 498; Foster, 240), 16 f., 21. Dozens of further instances may be traced in the lexica s.v. *palāhu*.

¹¹⁹ *Od.* 22. 39 f. cf. Thgn. 749 f.; *Erra* IV 27, 'you shall not fear god, you shall not be afraid of man'.

¹²⁰ Thgn. 1179 f. Cf. also *Il.* 13. 624, *Od.* 9. 274, 14. 389, Aesch. *Supp.* 479, 756, 893, *Trag.* adesp. 356.

Without you, the destitute and the widow are not cared for;
the destitute and the widow call upon you, O Lord.¹²⁶

In the hymn to Telibinu uttered daily on behalf of the Hittite king, the god is told:

Of the oppressed, the orphan and the widow thou art father and mother, the cause of the orphan thou, Telibinu, dost take to heart.¹²⁷

Yahweh ordains:

You shall not maltreat a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan: if you do afflict them, and they cry to me, I shall certainly hear their cry, and my wrath will be kindled.¹²⁸

Certain individuals are dear to the gods, or to a particular god, on account of their virtue or piety or for some other reason. A Homeric king is 'dear to Zeus' (διδίφιλος), a warrior 'dear to Ares' (ἀρηίφιλος). Hera sends Athena to restrain Achilles from killing Agamemnon because she loves and cares for both heroes.¹²⁹ A singer whom the Muse loves can produce wonderful songs.¹³⁰ Hector, Amphiaraus, and others are individuals characterized as 'dear to the gods'.¹³¹ In a Sumerian epic Gilgamesh is acclaimed king of Uruk in the lyrical formula

You are the king and warrior!

The basher of heads, the prince beloved of An!¹³²

From the third millennium to the first, Mesopotamian kings very often bore the epithet or title 'beloved of (such-and-such a god)'.¹³³ As in Greece, this could be made into a personal name; Naram-Sin, 'beloved of Sin', is analogous to names such as Diphilus or Herophilus. Hittite kings borrowed the formula, styling themselves 'beloved of the Storm-god' and the like. Solomon received from the prophet Nathan the name Yedid-Yah, 'beloved of Yah', because the Lord loved him.¹³⁴

The concept of being dear to or loved by the gods is employed in other ways in the different literatures.

1. It may be used retrospectively of someone whose life was notably happy and successful and whom the gods obviously did favour. Such is Helenus, who conquered Iolcus without difficulty and got a goddess for his wife. Tyrtaeus looks back to the victor of the First Messenian War as 'our king, Theopompus dear to the gods', and Nehemiah writes of Simon, 'among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel'.¹³⁵

2. As a current royal title, the expression certifies the monarch's absolute excellence and implies his ability to defeat all enemies.

3. In a battle context the belief that an army or hero enjoys divine favour gives confidence to that side, and makes the other side feel that they cannot succeed. Agamemnon encourages his men by telling them that Zeus has assured him of victory, and similarly in the ninth-century Old Babylonian epic the king tells his warriors 'Aššur has filled me with confidence', to which they respond with fervour. Diomedes is keen to take Odysseus with him on his nocturnal commando raid because, apart from his personal qualities, he is a man whom Athena loves and who could come safely out of a fiery furnace. Achilles warns Patroclus of the danger of pursuing the Trojans too close to their city: 'Apollo greatly loves them'. In the same way Enkidu is advised not to challenge Gilgamesh because 'Shamash loves him, and Anu, Enlil, and Ea have made his wisdom broad'. The Egyptians, pursuing the Hebrews and finding themselves discomfited, exclaim 'Let us retreat from before Israel, for Yahweh is fighting for them against Egypt'.¹³⁶

4. After the battle the outcome may be attributed to divine favour: 'the gods were on our side, and we won'; 'the gods were on their side, and there was nothing we could do'. Our ships greatly outnumbered theirs,

But some divine power so destroyed our host,
tilting the balance with unequal chance:
the gods keep goddess Pallas' city safe.¹³⁷

The divine protector saved the city for its lord.¹³⁸

¹²⁶ W. von Soden, *Iraq* 31, 1969, 85. 36 f. (Seux, 445; Foster, 595); E. Ebeling, *ZDMG* 69, 1915, 96. 26 f. (Seux, 451; Foster, 608).

¹²⁷ *ANET* 397 (CTH 376).

¹²⁸ Exod. 22. 21(20) f., cf. 23. 9, Lev. 19. 33 f., Jer. 7. 6, Ezek. 22. 7.

¹²⁹ *Il.* 1. 196 = 209, cf. 7. 280.

¹³⁰ Hes. *Th.* 96 f., *Od.* 8. 63, 481.

¹³¹ *Il.* 24. 749, Hes. *fr.* 25. 38; Tyro, *ibid.* 30. 24; Phyleus, *ibid.* 176. 4; Iasion, *ibid.* 185. 7.

¹³² *Gilgamesh and Agga* 35 f. (Irs. Jacobsen, 349, cf. 355).

¹³³ W. W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles. A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, New Haven 1957, 137; M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes*, Paris 1967, 189-97, 415-18. In Assurbanipal's case we find the formula 'beloved of the great gods'.

¹³⁴ Seux, *op. cit.*, 196; 2 Sam. 12. 24 f.; cf. Deut. 33. 12, Ps. 60. 7(5) (Bogan, 199).

¹³⁵ *Il.* 24. 61, 'Hes.' *fr.* 211. 3; Tyrt. 5. 1; Neh. 13. 26.

¹³⁶ *CPLM* no. 17 obv. 25; *Il.* 10. 242-7, 16. 94, cf. 17. 98-101; *Gilg.* I v 21 f.; Exod. 14. 25 (Hogan, 160 f.).

¹³⁷ Aesch. *Pers.* 345-7; cf. *ibid.* 454, Ag. 810 ff., Archil. 94, Adesp. iamb. 38, 5-11, etc.

¹³⁸ Old Babylonian Sargon epic (as p. 70 n. 25), 41.

5. In moralistic-admonitory literature the gods are declared to love people who display the virtues recommended by the author.

Work, Perses ... so that Hunger
may hate (i.e. shun) you, and fair-crowned Demeter love you
and fill your granary with livelihood ...
A working man is much dearer to the immortals.

The Lord loves the righteous.¹³⁹

KINGSHIP

The king's power over his subjects is in many ways like a god's. One could say that he is their human god. Some Sumerian and Old Babylonian kings actually awarded themselves divine status. In Assyria we meet the idea that the king is a sort of facsimile of a god.

By the disposition of Nudimmud his measure is counted with
the gods' flesh,
by the decision of the Lord of the Lands he was successfully
cast in (or from) the channel of the gods' womb.
He, he is Enlil's enduring image!¹⁴⁰

We may compare the Greek epic habit of describing kings and heroes as 'equal to a god' (ισόθεος), 'equivalent to a god' (ἀντίθεος), 'equal in the balance' (ἀτάλαντος) to such-and-such a god, or 'in god's likeness' (θεοεικελος). A king's favour is sought 'as if he were a god' (θεὸν ὥς).¹⁴¹ By classical norms these all seem dangerously extravagant expressions.

If the king was not exactly a god, he was often represented as born of the divine seed. In Greek mythology all royal lines descend from some union of god or goddess with mortal. In most cases these unions lie generations back in the past. But certain heroes, for example Achilles, Sarpedon, Minos, Heracles, Aeneas, are actually sons of a deity. This is in line with Near Eastern ideas. Many Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian kings, from Mesilim of Kish to Nabonidus, claimed to be the son of a god and/or a goddess, often the city god or goddess.¹⁴² Keret,

¹³⁹ Hes. *Op.* 299–309; Ps. 146. 8, cf. Prov. 15. 9.

¹⁴⁰ *Tuk.-Nin.* i A obv. 16–18. For other relevant references see *AHW* s.v. *šalmu* II 6c, *CAD* s.v. *šalmu* f 1'.

¹⁴¹ Hes. *Th.* 91, cf. *Il.* 9. 155, 12. 312.

¹⁴² Labat, 53–7; Frankfort, 300; Å. W. Sjöberg, *Orientalia Suecana* 21, 1972, 87–112. These affiliations were more symbolic than literal, as appears from the inconsistency with which some

the king of Ubr in Ugaritic legend, is a son of El.¹⁴³ The king of Israel could claim to be, at least in a sense, the son of Yahweh, and more than one king of Damascus is referred to in the Old Testament under the name Ben Hadad, the Son of Hadad.¹⁴⁴ The Hittite kings did not usually make such claims, but in a ritual text for the building of a new palace the king does twice refer to the Storm-god as his father.¹⁴⁵

It is also part of the royal ideology that the king is reared, or (more specifically) suckled, by a goddess or goddesses. Erechtheus was born from the earth and 'reared' by Athena. Heracles was suckled by Hera, in one version as an infant, in another as a grown man as a means to immortality.¹⁴⁶ In Mesopotamia this was an ancient idea. Many of the early Sumerian kings claimed to have been nourished by the milk of the mother goddess Ninhursāga, and many reliefs and terracottas show her suckling the royal infant. In *Enūma eliš*, when we read of Marduk that

Ea his father created him, Damkina his mother bore him;
he sucked the nipples of goddesses,

we know that he is marked out for kingship. The motif remained current with the Neo-Assyrian kings. In an oracle to Esarhaddon Ishtar calls herself his good wet-nurse, and in another to Assurbanipal she says 'Like a nurse I carried you on my hip ... I placed you between my breasts'. Nabu tells him 'You were little, Assurbanipal, when I left you with the Queen of Nineveh; you were a baby, Assurbanipal, when you sat on the knee of the Queen of Nineveh. Her four nipples were set in your mouth; two you were sucking, and two you pulled down to your face.'¹⁴⁷ We find the idea at Ugarit too. Keret is told that his wife will bear a son:

She shall bear the lad Yaṣṣib,
a sucker of the milk of Athirat,
a drainer of the breasts of the maiden [*'Anat*,]
the wet-nurse[s] of the gods].

rulers claim different divine parents at different times.

¹⁴³ *KTU* 1. 14 ii 6, 16 i 10, 20.

¹⁴⁴ 2 Sam. 7. 14, Ps. 2. 7, 89. 27(26) f.; 1 Ki. 15. 18, 20. 1, etc.; Robertson Smith, 44 f., 509.

¹⁴⁵ B. Schwartz, *Or.* NS. 16, 1947, 26, lines 26, 30 (*CTH* 414, *ANET* 357).

¹⁴⁶ *Il.* 2. 547 f.; Robert, 427; Gantz, 378. In the case of Achilles the process is at one remove: Hera refers to him as 'the son of a goddess whom I myself nurtured and reared and gave as wife to a man' (*Il.* 24. 59 f.).

¹⁴⁷ *En. el.* I 83–5; Labat, 64–7; M. Weippert, *ZAW* 84, 1972, 84 f. (Poster, 712); J. A. Craig, *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts* i, Leipzig 1895, 26 rev. 7 f.; *CPLM* no. 13 rev. 6–8 (Poster, 128).

A relief scene on an ivory panel from a royal bedstead shows two Ugaritic princes being suckled by a goddess.¹⁴⁸

Upon the young king the gods turn a *favouring eye*. This is again a traditional Sumerian motif, popular with the Neo-Assyrian rulers. Adad-nerari III was singled out by the regard of Aššur from his infancy. Sennacherib claims, 'Belet-ili looked upon me in the womb of my mother who bore me'. Esarhaddon says that Ishtar of Arbela chose him by raising to him her radiant eyes.¹⁴⁹ Hesiod asserts that whoever among kings the Muses favour, turning their eyes on him at his birth, he becomes a persuasive judge. Many later Greek authors too refer to gods turning their eye on someone, especially at his birth, with corresponding consequences.¹⁵⁰

In discussing the actualities of kingship in chapter 1 we noted that Greek rulers took over the Near Eastern royal symbol of the sceptre. They also took over the idea that the sceptre is given to the king by a god, who thereby confers divine authority upon his reign. Once again we can trace this motif in Mesopotamia from the third millennium to the first. Entemena got his sceptre from Enlil, Gudea from Ningirsu, Nūr-Adad from Nanna, Shalmaneser I from Aššur, Tiglath-pileser III from Aššur or Shamash, Nabu-apla-iddina from Marduk, and so on. The Moon-god is addressed in a hymn as

Sin, who givest the sceptre to every king,

and in a hymn to Shamash we read:

[Without you Anu does not give] sceptre or crown or c[rown] to the king.¹⁵¹

Similarly in the Aramaean states: Panammu I in the inscription on the colossal statue of Hadad at Zincirli claims that 'Hadad and El and Rakkabel and Shemesh and Reshep gave into my hands the sceptre of authority'.¹⁵² Several passages in Homer attest the same doctrine. Agamemnon's sceptre was made by Hephaestus for Zeus, who sent Hermes to give it to Pelops; from him it was passed on to Atreus, Thyestes, and Agamemnon. Odysseus brings the disorderly ranks to heel by saying

There must be a single marshal,
a single king, he to whom the son of Kronos has given

¹⁴⁸ KTU 1. 15 ii 25-8; Gordon (1962), 146, 198, and plate facing p. 161.

¹⁴⁹ Labat, 45 f. with further references; Frankfort, 238.

¹⁵⁰ Hes. Th. 81 f.; Call. fr. 1. 37 f.; Headlam on Herodas 4. 73.

¹⁵¹ Labat, 90 f.; KAR 74 rev. 5 = Seux, 413; E. Ebeling, ZA 51, 1955, 172, line 42 = Seux, 454 = Foster, 671, line 16.

¹⁵² KAI 214 = SSF ii, 64 no. 13, 3, 8. Panammu reigned c.780-743.

sceptre and *themistes*, so that he may take counsel for them.

Agamemnon tells Agamemnon that Zeus has given sceptre and *themistes* into his hand for that same purpose.¹⁵³

These and other passages make it clear that Zeus is also the source of the justice dispensed by the king. The *themistes* (norms, established by tradition or case-law) are given to him by Zeus together with his sceptre, and he guards them.¹⁵⁴ We find a parallel theory in Mesopotamia. Urkingina of Lagash claimed to make dwell in the country the word pronounced by his lord Ningirsu. Ur-Nammu made justice reign according to the equitable laws of the Sun-god Utu. Ishme-Dagan of Isin says, 'May Utu place justice and equity in my mouth!' Lipit-Ishtar, in the prologue and epilogue of his law-code, claims to establish justice in Sumer and Akkad in accord with the commands of Enlil, his 'father'. Hammurabi too, in the epilogue to his laws, writes 'Hammurabi, the king of justice, on whom Shamash bestowed just judgments, am I'. This is represented pictorially in the relief at the top of the stele on which the laws are inscribed. The god is shown dictating laws to Hammurabi, who stands before him in an attitude of reverence.¹⁵⁵ The Hebrew kings likewise draw their justice from a heavenly source:

O God, give your judgments to the king
and your righteousness to the king's son.
Let him judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.

Insight-into-divine-will (lit. divination) is on the lips of a king;
in judgment his mouth is not unfaithful

Even in a pre-monarchic setting the judge is treated as having a 'hot line' to God. Moses sits all day judging people's disputes, explaining that

They come to me to make enquiry of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me and I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make known God's statutes and directions.¹⁵⁶

Hammurabi's stele relief shows the king receiving his instruction in a face-to-face private encounter with the god of justice, who sits on his throne on a stylized mountain. Similarly Moses, the Hebrew lawgiver, gets his laws from Yahweh in private interviews on Mt. Sinai. In Greek

¹⁵³ Il. 2. 100-8, 204-6, 9. 97-9.

¹⁵⁴ Il. 1. 238 f. δικασπόλας οἱ τε θεμιστας πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύεται, Hymn. Dem. 103 θεμιστοπόλων βασιλῆων. Cf. West (1966), 183 f.; (1978), 141.

¹⁵⁵ Labat, 229 fig. 11, 230; Engnell, 40; ANET 159, 161, 178, 523.

¹⁵⁶ Ps. 72. 1 f.; Prov. 16. 10; Exod. 18. 13-16.

tradition we find a parallel in the legend of the just Cretan king and lawgiver Minos. In the *Odyssey* he is remembered as Διὸς μεγάλου ὀαριστῆς, 'great Zeus' intimate interlocutor'. Later authors explain that he went every ninth year to the Idaean cave to converse with Zeus and to receive instruction from him, upon which he based his laws.¹⁵⁷

A further element in the ideology of Mesopotamian kingship that is echoed in early Greek poetry is the doctrine that such communal blessings as timely seasonal rains, the growth of crops, and fertility of soil and livestock, depend on the king. Kassite and Assyrian kings prayed to the gods for these boons on behalf of their country, and when they materialized, they were interpreted as a reward for the king's piety (for example in building or restoring temples) or for his justice and righteousness. From the early second millennium, kings were praised for the good rains and crops experienced under their rule, and they themselves might proclaim these among the successes of their reigns. Let a couple of seventh-century quotations serve as illustration. Assurbanipal records in his Annals:

Adad released his rains, Ea opened his fountains. The corn grew five eils tall in its furrow, the ear five-sixths of an ell long. The harvest was successful, Nisaba's expansiveness continually made the pastures burgeon. The orchards brought the fruit to ripeness, the cattle had easy calving. In my reign there was plenty in abundance, in my years the surplus was piled up.

His learned exorcist Adad-shuma-ušur, petitioning the king for a job for his son, writes obsequiously:

The reign is propitious, orderly the days, the years are of justice. The rains are abundant, the sprung floods massive, the cost of living favourable. The gods are well disposed. Godfearingness is widespread, temples are prosperous, the great gods of heaven and earth have been prayed to in the span of the king my lord.¹⁵⁸

We naturally recall the well-known passage in the *Odyssey* (19. 109–14):

Like some flawless king, who, god-fearing,
ruling a numerous and doughty people,
upholds justice, and the dark earth brings forth
wheat and barley, and the trees are heavy with fruit,
the sheep and goats give birth without fail, and the sea provides fish
from his good leadership, and the peoples flourish under him.

¹⁵⁷ *Od.* 19. 179, *Pl. Leg.* 624ab, *Minos* 319c–e, cf. Ephorus *FGH* 70 F 147, etc.; Dornseiff, 265 f.

¹⁵⁸ Assurb. A i 45–51 (Streck, 6); S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, Helsinki 1993, no. 226 obv. 9 ff. = Foster, 899. See further Labat, 280, 284 f., 295 f.; Engnell, 43 f.; Frankfort 309 f.

Hesiod paints a similar picture in his description of the rewards of the just city (*Op.* 225–37). He does not refer specifically to kings, but in the context of his poem it is 'kings' who control the administration of justice and whose virtue, accordingly, should be reflected in the city's general prosperity or lack of it.

COSMOLOGY AND MYTHICAL GEOGRAPHY

The anatomy of the cosmos

In early Greek there is no word for the universe as a whole. It was not conceived as a unified entity but as the sum of its constituent parts. There were essentially four of these: the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the underworld. Hesiod speaks of the mysterious region where 'dark earth, misty Tartarus, the undraining sea, and the starry heaven all have their sources and extremities in order', and in Homer's account of the division by lot among the sons of Kronos 'everything' is divided up into the four portions, earth, broad heaven, hoary sea, and misty darkness.¹⁵⁹ Sometimes one of the four is left out of the picture as being irrelevant to the context, and the other three remain to represent a totality. For example, we have heaven, earth, and sea making up the provinces of Hecate's power, the world depicted on Achilles' shield, and the world visible to Persephone before she enters Hades' realm.¹⁶⁰ When Hesiod wants to tell us how far below earth Tartarus lies, it is the sea that is pinned over: Tartarus is 'as far down under earth as heaven is above earth'.¹⁶¹

In the Near East we find a similar general approach, though the parallels are not very specific. In the Old Testament the (upper) world is sometimes represented by the triad of heaven, earth, and sea: 'For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them.'¹⁶² An alternative formulation is 'the heavens, the earth, and the waters below the earth', where the waters below the earth are conceived

¹⁵⁹ *Hes. Th.* 736–9 = 807–9, cf. 678–83, 695–700, 839–41, 847–52; *Il.* 15. 189–93. In *Hes. Th.* 695–700 and 839–41 Oceanus is mentioned besides the sea.

¹⁶⁰ *Hes. Th.* 413 f., 427, *Il.* 18. 483, *Hymn. Dem.* 33 f.; in later poetry, A.R. 1. 496, *PMG* 935. 21–3, *Orph. H.* 1. 2, 38. 2; E. G. Schmidt, *Philologus* 125, 1981, 1–24 = id., *Erworbenes Erbe*, Leipzig 1988, 35–70.

¹⁶¹ *Hes. Th.* 720(–5). In *Il.* 8. 16 the three levels are extended to four, with Hades as a distinct stage between earth and Tartarus.

¹⁶² *Exod.* 20. 11, cf. *Ps.* 69. 35(34), 89. 10–12(9–11), 96. 11, *Neh.* 9. 6, *Hag.* 2. 6. The passages from the Psalms are cited by Schmidt, op. cit., 22 = *Erworbenes Erbe*, 60. It may be noted here that the Hebrew word for 'heaven', *šamayim*, is dual in form, but in Classical times, at least, it was conceived as a single region.

as being the source of both seas and rivers, and the home of fish.¹⁶³ But elsewhere it is Sheol, the place of the dead, that appears as the lowest region of the universe and as the polar opposite of the height of heaven.¹⁶⁴ In other passages all four regions are mentioned, as when the furthest limit of the Almighty is said to be

higher than heaven, deeper than Sheol,
its measure longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.¹⁶⁵

In Mesopotamian thought the sea has a less prominent role. It was on the flow of the great rivers that everything depended, and the imagined realm of subterranean water from which they sprang, the Apsu, assumed the status of the third great cosmic division below earth and heaven. The sea adjoined it but was not part of it; according to *Enūma eliš* the two had originally been united in one body, until Ea reduced Apsu to immobility and set his dwelling on top of him. The passage in *Atrahasis* about the threefold division of the cosmos by lot has already been quoted. The first two rulers, Anu and Enlil, receive heaven and earth respectively; the third, Enki or Ea, takes control of 'the bolts, the trap-bars of the sea', which we may understand to mean that from his seat in the Apsu he keeps the sea penned into its proper limits.¹⁶⁶ Here, then, as in the passages cited above from Exodus and Deuteronomy, the watery element is located below the earth (instead of on it, as in the Greek model), leaving no room for a separate underworld.

However, there was an alternative three-storey scheme with heaven, earth, and underworld (that is, the home of the dead). We have this in *Gilgamesh*, *Enkidu*, and *the Nether World* (cited above, p. 110 n. 20), and it is presupposed in such poems as *Nergal and Ereshkigal* and *The Descent of Ishtar*, where, however, gods seem to travel from heaven to the underworld and back without the world of men being mentioned on the way. In the *Gilgamesh* epic it is said of the twin mountains that guard the sunrise that 'their upper parts [each] the foundation of heaven; below, their breasts reach Arallu (= the underworld)'. Similarly in *Erra and Ishum* we hear of a mythical tree whose roots reach down 100 double-hours through the wide sea to the bottom of Arallu, and whose top reaches the heaven of Anu.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Exod. 20. 4, cf. Deut. 4. 18, 5. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Isa. 7. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Job 11. 8 f. Cf. Ps. 139. 7-10 (heaven, Sheol, and sea as possible places that one might flee to from the earth), Amos 9. 2 f.

¹⁶⁶ *Atr.* I 11-16 (above, p. 110).

¹⁶⁷ *Gilg.* IX 11-4 f.; *Erra* I 150-3.

An exoteric theological compilation by Kišir-Aššur, exorcist at the chief temple of Aššur in the mid seventh century, calls for mention here, because it contains a complete cosmological scheme which, despite its unsystematic speculative elaboration, provides a very interesting point of comparison with Hesiod and Homer. Here the heaven of Anu is the uppermost of three.

The upper heaven: *luludanū* (a variety of multi-coloured stone): Anu's. He ruled the 300 Igigi gods in it.

The middle heaven: *saggilmud* (a ruddy stone): the Igigi's. Bel sits there inside a throne-chamber on a dais of lapis lazuli and has lit a lantern of amber there.

The lower heaven: jasper: that of the stars. He drew the constellations of the zodiac upon it.

In the [at]tending of the upper earth he quartered the spirits of mankind.

In the [stand]ing of the middle earth he settled Ea his father.

[] his [] he did not identify (the) rebellion(?).

In the [stand]ing of the lower [ear]th he imprisoned the 600 Anunnaki.

[] of jasper.¹⁶⁸

There are two heavens above the firmament of the stars, and two earths below the one we live on. The one occupied by Ea must correspond to the Apsu of conventional cosmology. Bel, the king of the gods, has settled his father in this subterranean region: this reminds us of how Zeus settled Kronos below the earth. The infernal deities, the Anunnaki, have been imprisoned by Bel in the basement, just as Hesiod's Titans are imprisoned in Tartarus. In a sense there is an even closer parallel with Homer, who puts Tartarus far below Hades, in other words two floors down from our earth; Hades, however, does not properly correspond to the 'middle earth' of Kišir-Aššur's scheme.¹⁶⁹

The firmament

The idea of a heaven made of solid material such as stone or metal strikes the modern mind as unnatural, even bizarre. This is not just because aviators and astronauts have established beyond peradventure that the reality is otherwise. The Greeks in general tended to think of the sky (*ouranos*) as more or less equivalent to *aithēr*, something of airy or fiery nature, perhaps condensed to form a definite surface. It is only in poetic tradition that we encounter a heaven of bronze or iron.¹⁷⁰ As these metals

¹⁶⁸ CPLM no. 39 obv. 30-8 with the parallel text published by E. Weidner, *AfO* 19, 1959/60,

110. Cf. Livingstone (1986), 86-8; P. Kingsley, *JRAS* (3rd ser.) 2, 1992, 341 f.

¹⁶⁹ Hes. *Th.* 717-35; *Il.* 8. 13-16, 478-81, 14. 279.

¹⁷⁰ Bronze: *Il.* 5. 504, 17. 425, *Od.* 3. 2, Pind. *Pyth.* 10. 27, *Nem.* 6. 3. Iron: *Od.* 15. 329 = 17. 195.

do not naturally occur in sheet form, we may suspect that behind the Homeric allusions there lies some creation myth involving a divine builder; and as the techniques of metal-working came to Greece from the Near East, it is tempting to seek the sources of such a myth in that direction.

Kišir-Aššur's cosmology provides a general parallel for heavens made of solid, semi-precious materials known on earth, though I know of no Mesopotamian evidence for a metallic sky. There may be a hint of the concept, however, in the account of the creation in Genesis. God separates the upper from the lower waters by making a *rāqia'*, translated in the Septuagint as *στερέωμα* and in the Latin versions as *firmamentum*, and he gave it the name of *šāmāyim*, 'heavens'. The noun *rāqia'* is formed from the verbal root *rq*, which means to beat or stamp out flat, and is used especially of smiths beating out gold or silver into thin sheets or plating.¹⁷¹ This is the image most naturally suggested by the expression *wayyā'as 'ēlōhīm 'et-hārāqia'*, 'and God made the firmament'.¹⁷²

Further echoes of a metallic firmament appear in Zoroastrian literature. In one of the great Yašts, dating from sometime before the Achaemenid period, Ahura Mazda speaks to Zarathustra about the bright heaven, 'which reaches to this earth and round it just like a house ... firmly fixed, with far boundaries, with the appearance of glowing metal, shining to (all three of) the ridings (of the earth)'. In the cosmogony preserved in a Middle Persian text, the outlines of which can be traced back to a Phoenician model of the seventh or sixth century BC, the first product of Ohrmazd's material creation is the heaven, formed as a shining metal egg.¹⁷³

Heaven's gate

In Genesis the firmament serves to keep the celestial waters apart from those below; in Kišir-Aššur and Ezekiel the celestial gods live above it, out of our sight. But the ceiling dividing the upper regions from the

¹⁷¹ Cf. Exod. 39. 3, Num. 17. 3 f. (= 16. 38 f. in the English versions), Isa. 40. 19, Jer. 10. 9; Brown, 106–11. In Job 37. 18 the verb is used of God spreading a haze over the sky 'like a mirror of cast metal'.

¹⁷² Gen. 1. 7. It was 'the work of his hands', *mi 'āšeh yādāw*, Ps. 19. 2. It is doubtful whether, as Brown thinks, we should see an echo of cosmological theory in Yahweh's threat to punish Israelite sins by making 'your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze' (or vice versa), i.e. rainless and sterile (Lev. 26. 19, Deut. 28. 23). In the first vision of Ezekiel the firmament appears like sparkling ice or hoar-frost (1. 22 *k'ēn haqqérāh*). This recalls Empedocles' theory of the firmament as formed from air frozen into something like ice (DK 32 A 1 § 77, 51, 54).

¹⁷³ H. Lommel, *Die Yašt's des Awesta*, Göttingen & Leipzig 1927, 112; West (1971), 28–36; (1983), 103–6; CQ 44, 1994, 289–307.

lower cannot be an impermeable one. There has to be some means of passage between them.

In Homer the gods generally move freely between earth and heaven (or Olympus) without having to negotiate any particular barrier or crossing-point. But in two parallel passages in the *Iliad*, where Hera and Athena drive out to war, they pass through 'the gates of heaven' (*πύλαι νότανοῦ*), located close to the highest peak of Olympus.¹⁷⁴ It is said of these gates that they are guarded by the Horai, the personified Seasons, who swing back the dense cloud or set it in place across the opening. The gates exist, therefore, not just for casual through traffic: they are associated with seasonal openings of the sky, and presumably with rainfall, or they had been so associated by some earlier poet.

The Akkadian texts contain many references to the gate (*bābu*), great-gate (*abullu*), door (*daltu*), or bolt (*šigāru*) of heaven, or of Anu, the god who personifies heaven. Here too it does duty at two levels, the mythological and the meteorological. In the narrative poems it simply serves as the entrance through which people pass into heaven, for example:

When he went up to heaven,
when he approached the Gate of Anu,
Dumuzi (and) Gizzida were standing at the Gate of Anu.
They saw him, Adapa, they cried 'Mercy on us!'¹⁷⁵

On the other hand, in a prophecy of Marduk dating from the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104), the god signifies that this ruler will enjoy plentiful rains and general prosperity by saying:

The great-gate of heaven will be constantly open ... The rivers will bring fish; field and acreage will be full of yield ... Clouds will appear continually.¹⁷⁶

We find similar applications of the concept in the Old Testament. When Jacob has his dream-vision of the staircase reaching up to heaven, with God's Messengers going up and down it and Yahweh himself standing at the top, he declares, 'This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!'¹⁷⁷ But we also have the doors or windows of heaven as serving-hatches:

¹⁷⁴ *Il.* 5. 749 ff., 8. 393 ff. In the latter passage it appears that there are more gates lower down the mountain, marking the boundary of the gods' domain (8. 411).

¹⁷⁵ *Adapa* (Amarna version) B 48 f., cf. 23 f.; cf. *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iv 27', v 14', *Etana* IV/B 2, 40 (Gate of Anu, Enlil, and Ea).

¹⁷⁶ R. Borger, *Bibl. Or.* 28, 1971, 10 f., 16 f.; *TUAT* ii. 68; Foster, 306.

¹⁷⁷ Gen. 28. 17. The idea of a staircase leading up to heaven's gate is Babylonian: Old Babylonian diviner's prayer (quoted below, p. 142); *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) i 16', v 13', 42', vi 18.

And he commanded the clouds above
and opened the doors of heaven,
and he rained down upon them manna to eat
and gave them celestial grain.¹⁷⁵

In the Flood narrative it is the 'windows of heaven' that are opened to release the rains and closed to end them.¹⁷⁹ We may recall the window which Baal in the Ugaritic epic orders to be installed in his palace, which enables his thunder to break through the clouds.¹⁸⁰

Besides the sundry gods and visitors who may want to pass in and out of heaven at random in poetic narratives, there are certain important bodies whose going in and out is a matter of common and routine observation: the Sun-god, and the other luminaries of the skies. They too are said to make use of the gate of heaven, or alternatively of distinct portals of their own. In the *Odyssey* there is mention of the gates of the Sun, somewhere between Oceanus and the Asphodel Meadow.¹⁸¹ Gilgamesh journeys to the 'Twin' mountain (Mashu) 'which daily watches over the coming forth of Shamash', and there he encounters the Scorpion-man and his wife who guard its 'gates'. After discussion the Scorpion-man admits him through the 'great-gate' of the mountain (or land).¹⁸² When Etana flies up to heaven on the back of his friend the eagle, after passing the gate of Anu, Enlil, and Ea, they come to another gate, that of Sin, Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar. These are all astral or meteorological deities—respectively the Moon, Sun, Storm-god, and planet Venus—and this is why they have a special gate, separate from the main gate of heaven.¹⁸³ In hymns to them, however, we find such typical statements as

O Shamash, you have opened the bolts of heaven's doors,
you have ascended the staircase of pure lapis lazuli.

In one Hittite narrative there is reference to a heavenly ladder with nine steps (Hoffner, 32 § 5); this remarkably modest number is perhaps a reflection of shamanistic ritual. Cf. Frazer, ii. 52–8; M. Eliade, *Shamanism*, Princeton 1972, 487–90.

¹⁷⁵ Ps. 78, 23 f.

¹⁷⁹ Gen. 7, 11, 8, 2; cf. Isa. 24, 18, Mal. 3, 10; 1 Ki. 8, 35 'when heaven is locked up and there is no rain'.

¹⁸⁰ KTU 1, 4 v 61–vii 35, cf. above, p. 87. One of the two words used for this window corresponds to the Hebrew word used in the Flood story.

¹⁸¹ *Od.* 24, 12. Cf. the 'gates of the paths of Night and Day', *Parm.* B 1, 11 with Hes. *Th.* 744–57, and *Od.* 10, 82 ('Telepylos') with 86.

¹⁸² *Gilg.* IX 1–6, iv 43. Cylinder seals of Old Akkadian date show the flaming Sun-god climbing up from between the twin peaks; these are themselves set in the opening of a great double gate, which attendant deities have swung open. See H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, London 1939, pl. XVIII.

¹⁸³ Etana as above, n. 175.

You open up the closed bolts of heaven.

Shamash, you have flared up at the base of heaven,
you have opened the bolt of the pure heaven,
you have opened the door of heaven.

Foremost one, Sin, on your appearance you open the gates of heaven.¹⁸⁴

And too in the great Hittite hymn to the Sun:

Heaven's door they open for you, Istanu,
and heaven's gate you, Istanu, well tended,
pass through.¹⁸⁵

In a Babylonian hymn to the Gods of the Night, who are the great stars and constellations, we read that while the doors of men are all bolted, 'the great-gates of the b[road] heavens are open'; it is from these, evidently, that the stars come forth.¹⁸⁶

The outer circle

The early Greek poets do not give any clear indication of the shape that they conceive the heaven or earth to have, except that they have the great river Oceanus flowing all round the periphery of the earth, and it would be natural to think of his course as more or less circular rather than (say) triangular or cruciform. Achilles' shield, the decoration of which comprehended earth, sky, and sea, with Oceanus running round the rim, was no doubt imagined as a round shield. Later Herodotus was to deride people who made maps of the world and drew Oceanus flowing round it in a circle as true as if turned on a lathe. But he himself spoke of 'the whole circle of the sky', τὸν κύκλον πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, as being what the Persians revered as 'Zeus', and tragedians use expressions such as 'circle of the aither' (of the starry sky), 'circle of night', 'the circle above

¹⁸⁴ I. Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner*, Malibu 1983, 122, 10 f. (Foster, 151); Ebeling (1953), 1107 (Seux, 284; Foster, 665); S. Langdon, *OECT* 6, 1927, 52, 1–6 (Seux, 229); Seux, 479 = *Winter*, 680, 15. Cf. also Seux, 227 (= Foster, 662, 3–5), 233. Shamash, Sin, and Ishtar are each praised as ' opener of the door (or bolt) of (the pure) heaven': Tallqvist (1938), 155 f. See further W. Heimpel, *JCS* 38, 1986, 132–40.

¹⁸⁵ H. G. Güterbock, *JAS* 78, 1958, 240, i. 29–31 (*CTH* 372; *TUAT* ii. 797); cf. *KUB* xxiv. 3 i 11–5 (*CTH* 376; Gurney [1940], 24).

¹⁸⁶ Ebeling (1931), 163, 8–10 (Seux, 243 f.; Foster, 575, 1–3). Cf. Heimpel, op. cit., 139. The idea appears in a developed and systematized later form in *I Enoch* (33–6, 72–6). At the ends of the earth Enoch sees the various gates of heaven from which the stars come out, and other gates which are the sources of different winds bringing snow, rain, dew, and so on. In another passage it is specified that there are six gates in the east for the sun and moon to use in different months, and the same number in the west. The theory is taken to its ultimate conclusion in the Middle Persian cosmology (*Greater Bundahishn* 5B. 3, p. 65 Anklesaria), where the sun is said to emerge from a different window each day, there being 180 in the east and 180 in the west.

us' (= the sky).¹⁸⁷ κύκλος in these phrases refers not just to the rim of the sky but to the whole expanse contained within the periphery.

In Akkadian the word *kippatu*, 'loop, hoop, circle, circumference', is used in a similar way. The *kippatu* of heaven, or of heaven and earth means the whole expanse contained within the periphery. In the great Shamash Hymn we read:

You hold the circle of the lands suspended from inside the heavens.

Assurbanipal calls Marduk 'the one who holds fast the circle of the spangled sky and [all the] [lands]'.¹⁸⁸

In the Old Testament Yahweh is said to 'sit above the circle of the earth', 'al-ḥûg hā 'āreš, or to 'walk the circle of the sky', ḥûg šāmāyim.

He has drawn a circular boundary (ḥōq hāg) upon the waters up to the limit of light and darkness.

At his establishing of the heaven, there was I,
at his defining a circle upon the deep,
at his making firm the clouds above,
at his fixing the fountains of the deep.¹⁸⁹

Apart from these passages, the root ḥwg appears only in the noun *mḥûgāh* (Isa. 44. 13), a carpenter's instrument, understood to be a compass. William Blake actually depicted God holding a compass over the deep. No doubt the Almighty could have drawn a perfect circle without one, like Giotto, but in any case we are reminded of Herodotus' maps with their outer circle of Oceanus 'as if turned on a lathe'.

Oceanus

Although Oceanus is normally mentioned only in connection with the ends of the earth, as the stream that encircles the earth, he also appears as the father of all the world's rivers and springs, or according to Homer the source 'from which all rivers and all the sea and all springs and deep wells flow'.¹⁹⁰ This implies a mass of water, or at least of water channels, below the earth, and it makes Oceanus into something not altogether unlike the Hebrew *ṣhôm*, the deep which Yahweh marked out with a circle, or the Mesopotamian Apsu. They too, as we have seen,

¹⁸⁷ Hdt. 4. 36. 2; 1. 131. 2; Eur. *Ion* 1147, *Soph. Aj.* 672, *Phl.* 815; cf. *Ar. Av.* 1715. Of the philosophers, Anaximander at least held the earth to be flat and circular.

¹⁸⁸ *BWL* 126. 22 (*ANET* 387; Seux, 53; Foster, 537); *CPLM* no. 2 obv. 8 (Foster, 720). Further references may be found in the lexica.

¹⁸⁹ Isa. 40. 22, Job 22. 14, 26. 10, Prov. 8. 27 f. Cf. Brown, 112

¹⁹⁰ *Hes. Th.* 337-70, cf. *Pind. fr.* 326, *Il.* 21. 195-7.

are considered the sources of terrestrial rivers and springs. The difference is that Oceanus is never himself thought of as located below the earth, and conversely, *ṣhôm* and Apsu are not thought of as rivers winding round the earth.

However, we have one Babylonian document that does unequivocally represent the earth as encircled by a river. This is the famous map inscribed on a tablet in the British Museum, perhaps from the eighth century.¹⁹¹ It is a late copy from an original of probably the later eighth or seventh century. The river is actually drawn with a compass, as two concentric circles, and it is labelled in four places as the 'Bitter', *marratum*, with in at least one place the 'river' determinative *ir*. This term is first attested in the ninth century, as a local Chaldaean term for the head of the Persian Gulf. A little over a century later Sargon calls himself ruler of the Upper *river* Bitter and the Lower *river* Bitter, that is, of the eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf, which had traditionally been called the Upper and the Lower Sea. On the map the assumption is that there are not two separate seas but sections from a single, ring-shaped sea or salt river encircling the land mass that contained Babylonia, Assyria, Elam, Urartu, and the Zagros.

Along the outer shore of the *marratum* are shown several (originally probably eight) triangular *nagû*, 'regions', distant lands to be reached only by sea. What is left of the accompanying text suggests that for the Babylonian geographer they were of a somewhat fabulous character. The notes on several of them are intriguingly reminiscent of remote places mentioned in the *Odyssey*. The topmost *nagû* is labelled on the map 'where the sun is not seen': we think of the Cimmerians, whose land is on the far side of Oceanus, and whom the sun never looks upon (*Od.* 11. 15). To the third *nagû* 'a winged bird does not safely complete its journey': we think of Menelaus' voyage across such a fearful expanse of sea that 'not even the birds come back in the same year' (3. 321). In the seventh *nagû* there are 'cattle equipped with horns' that 'run fast enough to overtake a [...]': we think of Libya, 'where the lambs quickly grow horns' and where the sheep lamb three times a year (4. 85). And the eighth *nagû* is one where ... apparently something to do with dawn: we think of Circe's island near the house of Dawn and the rising of the sun (12. 3).

The *marratum* differs from Oceanus in that it is both a river and the sea. Oceanus in Archaic and Classical Greek is quite distinct from the sea, which it encloses and into which it debouches,¹⁹² though it can be

¹⁹¹ BM 92687; W. Horowitz, *Iraq* 50, 1988, 147-66 with pl. X.

¹⁹² *Hes. Th.* 790 f.

reached by sea in more than one direction. The Greeks had to place a mythical encircling river outside the seas that they knew. Oceanus resembles the map-maker's *marratum* not only in its circularity but also in that certain fabulous localities, such as the islands of the Gorgons, the Hesperides, and the Blest, are situated on its far side.

The etymology of Oceanus' name is quite obscure. The ancient thought of *ὠκεὸν ῥέειν*, 'swift flowing', among other derivations, but it cannot be explained from Greek. The likelihood of a loan word is increased by the fact that Pherecydes of Syros used a divergent form, *Ogēnos*.¹⁹³ No very convincing foreign models have been identified. It was once thought that there was a Sumerian word *uginna* 'ring', which seemed promising; but it does not exist. If a Semitic language should be the source, one might play with the above-mentioned Hebrew word for a (cosmic) circle, *hûg*, or with another Hebrew word, *hōq*, which means something prescribed or decreed, and is applied in several passages to the boundary set by Yahweh upon the sea or the heavens.¹⁹⁴ A cognate word might have been used in some Canaanite language in combination with a second noun, 'circle of X' or 'boundary of X', making a phrase that to a Greek ear sounded something like *ōk-ean*. But it is not easy to suggest what that second noun might have been.

Alternatively, we could point to a Semitic word meaning 'bowl, basin', the Akkadian *agannu*, Ugaritic *āgn* (**āgānu*), Hebrew *ʾaggān*, Talmudic *ʾōgān* (and *ʾōgen* = 'curved rim' of a vessel), Aramaic *ʾaggānā*; it was taken over in Hittite as *aganni-*. In one of the Ugaritic poems there is a myth about the origin of day and night. El goes 'to the shore of the sea, to the shore of the deep (*thm*)', and sees two women 'raising themselves up' over a basin (*āgn*); one goes down as the other rises up. The image is perhaps of two women washing clothes and alternately plunging their arms into the water. El makes both of them his wives for ever, and they bear sons. One gives birth to Šhr, Dawn, the other to Šlm, 'the Peaceful One', Dusk or Night. When the news is brought to El, he orders an offering to the Sun and the Stars.¹⁹⁵ The alternate rising and sinking of the two mothers obviously prefigures the

habits of the sons. So perhaps their *āgānu* at the edge of the deep reflects a conception of a cosmic *āgānu* over which Dawn and Dusk appear in turn. In Homer it is from and into Oceanus that the sun rises and sets, and for the stars it is a washing-place; Sirius emerges gleaming after his bath in Oceanus, and only the Bear has no share in these *λοετρά*.¹⁹⁶

Oceanus has a female partner, Tethys. In Hellenistic and Roman times Tethys was to become a handy, learned term for the great outer sea, with which Oceanus had come to be identified, or for the sea in general. In early poetry she is merely an inactive mythological figure who lives with Oceanus and has borne his children. There is, however, one line in the *Iliad*,

Oceanus the origin of the gods and mother Tethys,

suggesting a myth according to which these two were the first parents of the whole race of gods.¹⁹⁷ This has long been seen as a parallel to the theogony in *Enūma eliš*, where Apsu and Tiamat, the Sea, appear as the primeval parents. The comparison was first made by Mr. Gladstone, in the interval between his third and fourth terms as Prime Minister.¹⁹⁸

More recently the question has been raised whether Tethys' name is not actually derived from that of Tiamat.¹⁹⁹ From a philological point of view it seems quite possible. Tiamat's name is a Semitic word for 'sea, the deep', found in both masculine and feminine forms. The masculine prototype **tihāmu* is represented in Ugaritic *thm*, Hebrew *t'hōm* (masculine in form, often feminine in usage), and Syriac *t'hōmā*; the feminine **tihāmatu* in Eblaite *ti-ʾa-ma-tum*, Ugaritic dual *thmtm*, plural *thmt*, in syllabic writing *ta-a-ma-tu*, and Akkadian *tām(a)tu*, *tām(a)tu*, *tēmtu* (Mari). *Tāmtu* or *tēmtu*, unpronounceable as such in Greek, might have been taken over as *tēthu-* (perhaps at first with a nasalized vowel in the first syllable), with theta as usual for the Semitic *t* (but initial tau by dissimilation).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ *Il.* 7. 422, 8. 485, 18. 240, *Od.* 3. 1, 19. 434; *Il.* 5. 6; *Il.* 18. 489, *Od.* 5. 275

¹⁹⁷ *Il.* 14. 201 = 302, cf. 246.

¹⁹⁸ W. E. Gladstone, *Landmarks of Homeric Study*, London 1890, 129–32.

¹⁹⁹ Wirth, 43; O. Szemerényi, *JHS* 94, 1974, 150 = *Scr. Min.* iii. 1447; Burkert (1992), 92 f.

²⁰⁰ Burkert 93 writes: 'in the *Enūma Elish* we also find the form *taw(a)tu*. If one proceeds from *Tawtu*, then *Tethys* is an exact [sic] transcription.' In 64 occurrences of the name in *Enūma eliš*, 57 have the spelling *tī-amāt*. In ten places one or more manuscripts have *ta-ā-wa-tu*, *ti-ā-wa-ti*, and similar forms. But the *wa* sign should probably be interpreted as a learned equivalent of *ma* (*ma*g). Intervocalic *w* had developed into *m* in the Old Babylonian period; for example, *awatum* 'word' > *amatu*. Later scholars probably did not know the *w* sound, and they will have taken the *wa*/*we*/*hu* sign which they found used in words like *awatum* in ancient tablets as an archaic way of writing *ma*. So these occasional spellings in *Enūma eliš* are not evidence for a spoken *t(i)āw(a)t*, which would be an anomalous development from original *tāmat*- and contrary to the historical change *w* > *m*. It is true that Tiamat's name appears in Eudemus as *Ταυθε* (and Damkina's as *Δαυκκη*), but this only

¹⁹³ See West (1971), 18, 50. *Zas* embroiders on Chthonie's robe the earth, *Ogenos*, and the Mansions of *Ogenos* (ὠγεννοῦ δώματα). I suggested that these were habitations beyond Ocean which Pherecydes mentioned because he had seen them depicted on a map like the Babylonian one. There is a further point of comparison between the two documents. In Pherecydes' narrative Chronos defeated a monstrous serpent Ophioneus and his brood, and consigned them to the waters of Ocean. The Babylonian text accompanying the map speaks of 'the destroyed gods whom Marduk [settled] inside the sea', and there follows a list of monsters and other creatures 'which Marduk created upon the restless sea'.

¹⁹⁴ Job 26. 10 quoted above, 38. 10, Prov. 8. 29, Ps. 148. 6.

¹⁹⁵ *KTU* 1. 23 30–54.

The possibility that Tiamat's name resounds in Homer lends colour to the suggestion²⁰¹ that there is also an echo of Apsu's, in the strange epithet *apsorrhoo*s which is applied to Oceanus and to nothing else. The poets no doubt understood it to mean 'flowing back (ἀψ) into itself' though that does not correspond to Hesiod's conception of its flow (11. 791 f.), and the formation is anomalous, as ἀψ should not become ἀψο in a compound. The word occurs only in the genitive formula ἀψορρόου Ὠκεανοῖο; was this a reinterpretation of an *Ἀψδ, ῥόου Ὠκεανοῖο, 'of Apsu, the stream of Oceanus' (or the stream of the cosmic Basin, or whatever)?

The pillars of heaven and earth

The motif of a pillar or pillars supporting the sky does not play a prominent role in Greek myth. In the *Odyssey* Calypso is identified as a daughter of the baleful Atlas, 'who knows the deeps of the whole sea and has in his personal keeping the tall pillars which surround (or keep apart) earth and heaven'. Hesiod, on the other hand, has Atlas supporting the sky on his head and hands in the far west; he mentions no pillars in connection with him, though later he describes the cave of Siva as surrounded by silver columns that are attached to the sky.²⁰² The poet of *Prometheus Vincitus* awkwardly combines the two kinds of support: his Atlas stands in the west supporting 'the pillar of heaven and earth' on his shoulders. For Herodotus 'Atlas' is the African mountain, its peaks too high to be seen, and 'the Pillar of Heaven' is the natives' name for it. Pindar had earlier used the phrase of Etna. Ibycus somewhere mentioned the slender pillars of heaven.²⁰³ I do not know of any mention in Greek of pillars supporting the earth.

In Near Eastern literature too the concept of cosmic pillars is rare. In the Book of Job, immediately following the verse about Yahweh drawing a circle on the waters at the boundary of light and dark, we read 'The pillars of heaven tremble and are bewildered at his rebuke'. In *I Enoch* the four winds which support the firmament are equated with 'the pillars of heaven'. There are also a couple of mentions of the pillars of earth:

proves how a fourth-century Greek heard *Tāmti*. In Berossus she appears as τθαλατθ, corrupted perhaps from θαλατθ or θαπρε. In Hellenistic Babylonian written in Greek letters, intervocalic *m* is represented by *v* or zero: σανασ = *Šanaš*, ηουκ = *emūq*, ωει = *ūmi* (J. A. Black and S. M. Sherwin-White, *Iraq* 46, 1984, 136). It may also be noted that the name of the Neo-Babylonian king Amel-Marduk appears in the Old Testament as *ʾwyl-mrdk*, which the Masoretes—not uninfluenced, perhaps, by Hebrew *ʾēwāl* 'foolish'—vocalized as *ʾēwāl-mʾrādak*.

²⁰¹ Germain, 531 f.

²⁰² *Od.* 1. 52–4; Hes. *Th.* 517–20, 746–8, 779.

²⁰³ *PV* 348–50; *Hdt.* 4. 184. 3; *Pind. Pyth.* 1. 19; *Ibyc. PMGF* 336.

He shakes the earth from its place, and its pillars shudder.

When earth is dissolved, and all its inhabitants, I am the one who adjusts its pillars.

For Yahweh's are the pillars of the earth, and he has set the world upon them.²⁰⁴

There is artistic evidence from Anatolia, Syria, and Assyria. Seals and other monuments of the second millennium show a winged disc, representing the sky, supported by one or two pillars, or alternatively by one or two winged demons, Scorpion-men, or fully anthropomorphic figures, sometimes kneeling; they hold it up on head and hands, just as Herodotus describes Atlas.²⁰⁵ In this part of the Near East, then, we have parallels not just for the Greek concept of one or more pillars of heaven, but for the fluctuation between pillars and an Atlas figure.

Atlas has a partial mythological parallel in the Hurro-Hittite tradition, in the giant Ubelluri upon whom heaven and earth were built, and on whose shoulder (or arm) the stone child Ullikummi stands as he grows up to heaven out of the sea. As this Ubelluri must be largely Ugaritic, he has been cited in particular in connection with the *Odyssey* passage mentioned above, where Atlas is described as if he were a child of the sea.²⁰⁶

The navel of the earth

Among the sights of Apollo's precinct at Delphi was the 'navel of the earth', γῆς ὀμφαλός, marking the centre point of the world. Pindar and Aeschylus are the first extant authors to refer to it, but from their time on it is constantly alluded to.²⁰⁷

The identical term 'navel of the earth', *ṭabbūr hā 'āreṣ*, occurs in Hebrew. It refers to the mountainous central region of Israel, the highest part of the land. At a later period Mt. Zion is identified as the centre of the navel of the earth, and as one of a triad of holy places that face one

²⁰⁴ Job 26. 11 (Bogan, 435), *I Enoch* 18. 3; Job 9. 6, Ps. 75. 4(3), 1 Sam. 2. 8; cf. Brown, 114. Two different words for 'pillar' are used, *ʾammūd* and *māṣṣāq*.

²⁰⁵ H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 187 figs. 57 and 59, 209 f., 219 figs. 66 and 67, 275–8 with figs. 89 and 90; Pls. XXXIIIb, c, XXXIVb, XLIIe; Crowley, 127 and figs. 64B, 212.

²⁰⁶ Ullikummi I C iii 23, III A iii 23–47; A. Lesky, *Anzeigen der Österr. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien*, 1950, 148–55 = *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bern 1966, 363–8. On the great rock relief at Yazılıkaya, two males from Bogazköy, two bull-men are shown standing on the hieroglyph EARTH and holding up the hieroglyph HEAVEN (figures 28–9).

²⁰⁷ Calypso's island is located at the 'navel of the sea', *Od.* 1. 50. A poem put out under the name of Epimenides, DK 3 B 11 (c. 430 or later) denied that there was any 'central navel' of earth or sea, at any rate none known to man: οὐτε γὰρ ἦν γαίης μέσος ὀμφαλὸς οὐδὲ θαλάσσης· εἰ δὲ τίς ἐστι, θεοῖς δῆλος, θνητοῖσι δ' ἄφαντος.

another, the other two being Sinai, as the centre of the desert, and the Garden of Eden, the Lord's dwelling-place.²⁰⁸

We cannot dismiss this 'navel' as a mere picturesque metaphor for a central protuberance. Behind it there may lie an old myth that this was the place where heaven and earth were once joined and where their separation was effected, or where there is still a line of communication between them. There is one context in which the idea of the centre of the earth, often conceived as a great mountain rising up towards heaven, is of especial significance: in shamanistic mythology. It is to the cosmic centre, where heaven, earth, and underworld are all connected, that the Asiatic shaman repairs (in spirit) in order to pass from one world to another and obtain hidden knowledge, converse with the gods or the souls of the dead, and so on. In Yakut belief there is a paradise tree at 'the golden navel of the earth', and the Yakut shaman mounts to heaven by means of a seven-stepped mountain whose summit is in 'the navel of the sky', at the Pole Star.²⁰⁹ At Delphi, an oracular site on a mountain, claimed as the centre of the earth, there was said to be direct access from the sanctuary to the underworld.²¹⁰ Thus the Delphic 'navel of the earth' appears as an organic element in a diviners' cosmology.

In *The Orphic Poems* I argued that these and other shamanistic motifs in Greek myth came down from the north, from Thrace and Scythia. I pointed to Delphi's ritual connections with Tempe in northern Greece. In the first chapter of the present work (p. 50) the kind of prophecy practised at Delphi has been linked rather with Anatolia and north Syria. In Anatolia, at least, some reflections of shamanistic practice and ideology can be seen, more clearly than in the Semitic countries to the south. The Hebrews probably took over the expression 'navel of the earth', like so much else, from the older Canaanite culture. It retained a certain resonance, but the specific religious associations that it had once had were lost.

²⁰⁸ Jdg. 9. 37. Ezek. 38. 12; Jub. 8. 19; Jerusalem called 'navel of the country', Jos. Bell. Jud. 3. 3. 5. Cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Ideas of the Western Semites concerning the Navel of the Earth* (*Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeling Letterkunde*, n. r. 17. 1), Amsterdam 1916, 35 f., 41; S. Terrien, *Vetus Testamentum* 20, 1970, 317-38 (with extensive bibliography).

²⁰⁹ *Eliade* (as n. 177), 266, 272.

²¹⁰ West (1983), 11 f., 147.

ESCHATOLOGY

Living up the ghost

In Homer, when a man dies, his *psūkhē* leaves his body and departs to Hades, where it continues to lead some sort of existence—one cannot say life, because life is, by definition, what it has lost. It is only in separation from the body that the *psūkhē* has any role to play in the description of human activity. The word is related to *psūkhō* 'to blow, cool', and it must have been thought of as airy in nature. It makes its exit from the face, in other words with the breath. When someone swoons, it is exhaled like a vapour. The *psūkhē* of the dead Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles in a dream, departs again 'like smoke'.²¹¹

In Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Hebrew we find similar conceptions. When the dead Enkidu's ghost (*utukku*) comes up from the earth to Ilgumesh, it comes 'like a wind', *kī zāqīqi*, and the same word, *zāqīqu* or *zāqīqu*, is itself often used of human or supernatural 'spirits'.²¹² In the Old Testament death means the separation of the soul or spirit from the body. Rachel called her newborn son Ben-ōnī 'at the going forth of her spirit (*népeš*), for she died'. When a man dies, it is said that 'his *népeš* will go to the generation of his fathers'. The word *népeš* has a wide range of meanings, including the living being, the self, desire, appetite, emotion, and so on, but it comes from a Semitic root meaning 'blow, breathe'. In the Psalms another word for 'spirit' is used, *rūah*, which means basically 'wind'; we may be reminded of the etymological connection between the Greek *anemos* 'wind' and the Latin *animus* 'mind, spirit' and *anima* 'soul'.

You take away their wind, and they perish.

His wind goes forth, he returns to his (original) soil.²¹³

In Ugaritic epic we find the same two words used in this connection in the same breath, so to speak. As 'Anat sets Yatpan to kill Aqhat, she says *ṣ'ī km rḥ nṣḥ*, 'let his breath/spirit go forth like a wind'. And in the next breath she provides a parallel to Homer's comparison to smoke: '(let) his vital appetites (go forth) like spittle(?), like incense-smoke (*qṭr*) from his nose'. In another passage *qṭr* is apparently used of a dead man's spirit itself.²¹⁴

²¹¹ *Il.* 16. 856, 22. 362 ἐκ πεθέων; 22. 467 ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχὴν ἐκάπυσσεν; 23. 100 ἦντε ἐοικώς (cf. Emp. DK 31 B 2. 4).

²¹² *Gilg.* XII 84; *AHW* and *CAD* s.v. Cf. Jacobsen, 53.

²¹³ Gen. 35. 18, Ps. 49. 20(19), 104. 29, 146. 4; cf. 1 Ki. 17. 21, Jonah 4. 3, Eccl. 12. 7.

²¹⁴ *KTU* 1. 18 iv 25, cf. 37; 17 i 28.

In Near Eastern belief, as in Greek, the soul of a dead man may reappear on earth and manifest itself visibly to the living, in a dream or otherwise. The appearances of the ghosts of Enkidu and Patroclus are obvious literary examples. It is implicit in the practice of necromancy, which was considered in chapter 1 (pp. 50 f.). There is also the belief that the dead might be wrathful and cause physical or psychological torment to the living. The unburied dead in particular were liable to be restless and troublesome.²¹⁵

Going down

For both the Greeks and the Semitic peoples the soul's journey at death was a descent. One was said to 'go down' to the earth or to the underworld. Homer speaks of a man or his *psūkhē* 'going down' (καταλθεῖν, κατίμεν) into Hades or Hades' house; Patroclus' *psūkhē* after visiting Achilles in the dream 'was gone like smoke down into the earth' (κατὰ χθονὸς .. ὤχετο).²¹⁶ In Akkadian (w)arādu 'go down' is used with 'to the earth' (*ana eršetī*) or with more explicit names of the underworld such as *arallū* or *erkalla*. In Ugaritic and Hebrew the West Semitic form of the same verb, *yrd*, is used. When Baal in the Ugaritic epic sends his envoys to Mōt, the personification of Death, he instructs them to go

towards the rock of Trgzz,
towards the rock of Trmg,
towards the two hills that bound the earth.
Lift up the rock on your hands,
the wooded height upon your palms,
and go down (to) the house of seclusion, (to) the earth,
be counted with those that go down (to) the earth.²¹⁷

Another Ugaritic text speaks of 'going down to the dust'. In the Old Testament we find phrases such as 'all those that go down to the dust', 'those that go down to the grave', 'who went down uncircumcised to the lower earth' ('*el- 'eres tahiyyōt*'), 'let them go down to Sheol alive', 'In my going down to the Pit (*šāḥat*)', 'I went down to the earth, its bars are behind me for ever'.²¹⁸ In Hittite, too, the dying are said to 'go down to the Dark Earth'.

Is there a particular direction one must take in order to find the way down into the lower world? An answer that might suggest itself is the western horizon, where the sun and other luminaries regularly go down. We find occasional passages implying this idea. A Babylonian prayer for the exorcism of a malevolent ghost contains the wish

Let it go to the sunset,
let it be entrusted [to Nedu], the chief [gate]keeper of the earth.²¹⁹

Similarly in a Hittite ritual designed to appease the god Telibinu: let his anger depart from the house and fields,

Let it go the road of the Sun-god of the earth. The doorkeeper has opened the seven doors, drawn back the seven bolts. Down in the dark earth bronze cauldrons stand ... What goes in does not come out again, it perishes therein.²²⁰

In the Ugaritic Keret epic, Keret's wife foresees his death:

Keret will certainly come to the going-in of the sun ('*rb špš*),
your lord and mine to the hiding of the sun.²²¹

There may be a hint of the concept in the *Odyssey*, when the seer Theoclymenus has his vision of the suitors' ghosts hastening Ἐρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον (20. 356). This may mean no more than 'to the lower Darkness', but in several passages ζόφος has the specific meaning 'the west, the direction of the sunset', in opposition to ἡὼς ἡέλιός τε. The name of the West Wind, Ζέφυρος, is assumed to be related to ζόφος. Ἐρεβός too has this sense in the description of Scylla's cave as being πρὸς ζόφον εἰς Ἐρεβός τετραμμένον.²²² After the suitors are slain, Hermes leads their souls past the gates of the Sun; whether these are the gates of sunrise or of sunset is not said, and we should perhaps not jump to a conclusion on the question.²²³ The idea that the souls of the dying fly off to the western horizon appears more explicitly in Sophocles, in the passage about the plague victims in the parodos of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (175–8):

You'll see one after another, like a fleet-winged bird
speeding stronger than furious fire
to the shore of the god of the west.

²¹⁵ See J. Bottéro in Alster, 28, 39–42; Burkert (1992), 65 f.

²¹⁶ *Il.* 6. 284, 7. 330, 14. 457, *Od.* 10. 560, 11. 65; *Il.* 23. 100 f.

²¹⁷ *KTU* 1. 4 viii 1–9 (= 5 v 11); cf. 5 i 6, vi 24 f. = 6 i 7 f., 114 obv. 22.

²¹⁸ *KTU* 1. 161; *Ps.* 22. 30, *Ezek.* 26. 20 (cf. *Ps.* 88. 5, *Isa.* 38. 18), 32. 24, *Ps.* 55. 16 (cf. *Job* 7. 9) 30. 10(9), *Jonah* 2. 6, *Tromp.* 27–34.

²¹⁹ Ebeling (1931), 141. 14 f. (Seux, 417; Foster, 560). Cf. Tallqvist (1934), 24 f.

²²⁰ *KUB* xvii. 10 iv 13–17 (*CTH* 324; J. Friedrich, *Hethitisches Elementarbuch*, ii, 2nd ed., Heidelberg 1967, 54; *ANET* 128; Hoffner, 17 § 26–7).

²²¹ *KTU* 1. 15 v 18–20.

²²² ζόφος, *Il.* 12. 240, *Od.* 9. 26, 10. 190, 13. 241; Ἐρεβός, *Od.* 12. 81.

²²³ *Od.* 24. 12; cf. above, p. 142.

Erebos has an impeccable Indo-European etymology, with cognates in Sanskrit, Armenian, Gothic, and Old Norse, all signifying things like 'darkness, dusk, evening'. At the same time, it looks remarkably like the Hebrew *'ereb* 'sunset, evening', which has been repeatedly compared since at least the early seventeenth century.²²⁴ The Hebrew word seems to be a brachylogy corresponding to Ugaritic *'rb špš* and Akkadian *erēb šamši*, 'the going-in of the sun'. This is the phrase used in the passage I have just quoted about the death of Keret. So although the Hebrew *'ereb* is not used in connection with dying, the longer Ugaritic expression is.

One-way traffic

An aspect of the soul's journey below that is frequently emphasized is that it is to a place from which there is no returning. 'The Land of No Return', Kur-nu-gi₄, was already established by the Sumerians as a common name of the underworld. It was taken over by the Akkadians, either as Kurnugi or translated as *eršet* (or *qaqqar*) *lā târi*. Ishtar determines to go down

To Kurnugi, the land [of no return] ...
to the house whose entrants do not go out,
on the road whose travelling is of no returning.²²⁵

The same idea is expressed in the Book of Job: 'before I go, not to return, to the land of dark and blackness'; 'I shall be going the road I shall not return'.²²⁶ In Greek we may refer once again to Patroclus' ghost's visit to Achilles. Give me your hand, it says, 'for I shall not come back again after this, once you have given me my due of the fire'. Hesiod describes how the fierce hound at the entrance to Hades' house wags its tail at those who arrive but will not let any of them out again.²²⁷

The theme that there is no return from Hades recurs quite frequently in later Greek and Latin poetry. Anacreon makes use of it in lamenting his old age. Hades is a fearful hole, he says, καὶ γὰρ ἐτοῖμον καταβαίνει μὴ ἀναβῆναι, 'for one who goes down there is likely not to come up'. The formulation is closely matched in another passage in the Book of Job, *yôred š'ôl lō' ya'āleh*, 'one who goes down to Sheol will not come up'.²²⁸ It occurs much earlier in the Hittite ritual text which I

²²⁴ Chr. Beermann, *Manuductio ad Latinam linguam*, Vitebergi 1609, 338; cf. Brown, 57 f.

²²⁵ *Descent of Ishtar* 1, 5 f., cf. *Gilg.* VII 176 f., *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iii 1; Tallqvist (1934), 15 f.

²²⁶ Job 10, 21, 16, 22; cf. 2 Sam. 12, 23.

²²⁷ Il. 23, 75 f., Hes. Th. 769–73.

²²⁸ Anacr. PMG 395, 10–12 = Job 7, 9.

quoted above, where the anger of the god Telbinu is sent by spells to the underworld: 'what goes in does not come out again'. The ghost of Urilum is summoned up by incantations, but he observes that it was difficult to get leave:

It is not easy of exit
by any means; the gods below the earth
are better at taking than at letting go.

The Sumero-Akkadian 'land of no return' finds a later echo in an epitaph by Antipater of Sidon: 'you have gone to the no-turn, no-return region of those below'. When Catullus pictured Lesbia's sparrow going *per iter tenebricosum, illuc unde negant redire quemquam*, he was no doubt aware that he was using a traditional motif, but he surely had no idea that it could be traced back through oriental literatures for some two thousand years before his time.²²⁹

Crossing the water

From Homer on we find the motif that it is necessary to cross a river, or some other body of water, in order to reach the land of the dead. Odysseus has to sail across Oceanus to reach Hades. Sappho, Alcaeus, and Aeschylus speak of crossing the Acheron.²³⁰ We do not at first hear anything of the ferryman Charon; he seems to appear in the late Archaic period. We know that he featured in the *Minyas*, an epic poem of uncertain date; representations in art begin about 500 B.C. In Aristophanes' *Frogs* he is clearly a figure already well known to popular mythology. Here it is a great bottomless lake that has to be crossed.

A river that is crossed by the dead also appears sporadically in Babylonian literature. Its name is the Hubur. Sometimes it stands for 'death', or the metaphorical condition of death experienced by the unguished.²³¹ The counsellor figure in the *Theodicy* tells the sufferer, who has self-pityingly spoken of his parents' deaths:

Certainly our fathers are given over, and go the way of death:
they cross the river Hubur, according to the ancient saying.²³²

²²⁹ Aesch. Pers. 688–90, Antip. Sid. Anth. Pal. 7, 467 (Gow–Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams*, 536 f.), Catull. 3, 12; cf. Eur. H.F. 431, fr. 868, etc.; my *Studies in Aeschylus*, Stuttgart 1990, 121.

²³⁰ Od. 10, 508, 11, 13–22, 639–12, 2 (it is not absolutely clear that Hades is on the far shore, but this is surely what is meant); Sapph. 95, 11–13, Alc. 38a, 2–3, 8; Aesch. Sept. 856. It has recently been suggested that a painted scene that includes an oared ship on a Mycenaean larnax from Tanagra (14th century) represents a post-mortem voyage (S. Immerwahr in J. B. Carter and S. P. Morris (edd.), *The Ages of Homer. A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, Austin 1995, 117).

²³¹ Ludlul IV 7, Shamash Hymn 62 (BWL 58, 128; Foster, 322, 539); cf. Tallqvist (1934), 33 f.

²³² *Theodicy* 16 f. (BWL 70; Foster, 807).

In the seventh-century text known as *The Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince* we meet the grim ferryman himself. He is described among the other terrifying demons and monsters of the nether world:

Humuṭ-tabal, the ferryman of the underworld, had a head of the Anzu bird; his four hands and feet [...].²³³

In the Old Testament the infernal river is to be found only in that book which contains so many remarkable mythical motifs, Job.

He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from crossing the Watercourse (*šélah*).

He has redeemed my soul from crossing the Watercourse, and my life will see the light.

But if they do not listen, they cross the Watercourse, and die without knowledge.²³⁴

There was an actual river Acheron in Thesprotia, and another in south Italy. But the Acheron of Sappho and Alcaeus is a mythical stream beyond which lies the land of the dead. Why is this stream named Acheron? The Greeks etymologized it as 'flowing with woe', but the name cannot have been coined in order to express that idea. Is it simply a coincidence that there is a Hebrew word *'ahārôn*—almost identical in sound with *Ἀχέρων*—meaning among other things 'western', and applied in this sense to the western sea? We have seen that both Greeks and Semites sometimes associated dying with 'going to the sunset', and from the Semitic point of view that meant crossing the western sea, in Hebrew *hayyām hā'ahārôn*.

The gates of death

In Homer Hades' house is called εὐρυπυλές, 'wide-gated', and he himself has the formulaic epithet πυλάρτης, 'the gate-fastener', clearly alluding to the gates through which the dead pass and which are fastened behind them. Tlepolemus tells his foe Sarpedon that he thinks the latter will be defeated by him and will 'pass through the gates of Hades'. Patroclus' ghost begs for a prompt funeral so that he can pass through them. Elsewhere they are mentioned as a paradigm of something abhorrent: 'I hate (such and such a type of man) no less than the gates of Hades'. In Hesiod's description of the underworld the house of the 'god

²³³ CPLM no. 35 rev. 5 (Poster, 734). Humuṭ-tabal's name means 'Hurry, take away!'

²³⁴ Job 33. 18, 28 (MSS.), 36. 12. See É. Dhorme, *Le livre de Job*, Paris 1926, 452 f. = *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trs. H. Knight, London 1967, 496 f.; M. Tsevat, *Vetus Testamentum* 4, 1954, 41–9; Tromp, 147–51.

of the earth' (θεοῦ χθονίου) is guarded by a ferocious dog—elsewhere called Cerberus—who devours any who try to make an exit through the gates'. An elegist speaks of 'passing the dark gates that keep in the souls of the dead, for all their protests'. The gates of Hades remain as a conventional concept in later poetry. In Aristophanes they are provided with a janitor.²³⁵

In one of the Sumerian poems about Gilgamesh the hero's *ellag*, a treasured plaything, falls into the underworld and comes to rest 'at the gate of Ganzir, the front (entrance) of the nether world'.²³⁶ The infernal gates play a prominent part in the Sumerian and Akkadian narratives of the Descent of Inanna/Ishtar. In the Akkadian version, for instance, we read

When Ishtar arrived at the gate of Kurnugi,
she spoke to the keeper of the gate:
'Gatekeeper, hey there, open your gate,
open your gate, I want to come in.'

She then threatens to break down the door, shatter the bolt, and smash the doorpost if she is not admitted. In what follows it turns out that there is a series of seven gates through which she must pass in turn.²³⁷ Similarly in *Nergal and Ereshkigal*: divine visitors to the underworld first arrive at the gate of Ereshkigal, where a gatekeeper is posted, and then they must pass through seven gates.²³⁸ In an exorcistic text the gate's function as a barrier to keep those inside from getting out comes to the fore. The evil demons are banished to the underworld, and

May Ningišzida, the thronebearer of the wide (lower) earth, make fast
their guard,
may Nedu the great janitor of the wide earth [bar] their gate.

In another, we find the gate and the river Hubur mentioned side by side.

With the Anunnaki may they enter the great-gate, may they not [return;]
may they enter the river Hubur, may they not turn back;

²³⁵ Il. 5. 646, 23. 71; 9. 312 = *Od.* 14. 156; *Hes. Th.* 767–73; *Thgn.* 709 f.; *Aesch. Ag.* 1291, 1292; *At. Ran.* 464 ff. (cf. K. J. Dover's edition, 50–5). We also find νεπρέρων πύλαι 'the gates of the infernal ones', *Eur. Hipp.* 1447; σκοτεινὰ πύλαι 'the gates of darkness', *Eur. Hec.* 1. Cf. H. Voss, *Kl. Schr.* iv, Leipzig 1913 (Osnabrück 1965), 226 ff.

²³⁶ *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* 167.

²³⁷ *Descent of Ishtar* 12–15 etc.

²³⁸ *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) i 17' ff., iii 10' ff., vi 19 ff. In the Amarna version (51–76) there are fourteen gates.

may they enter the gate of the city of death, may they not be seen
[among the living.]²³⁹

In the Old Testament there are several references to the gates of Death or of Sheol.

Their soul abhorred every food, and they were approaching the gates of Death.

Have the gates of Death been revealed to you, and have you seen the gates of Darkness?

I said, In the siesta of my days I must make my way to the gates of Sheol;

I am deprived of the rest of my years.²⁴⁰

The dog that guards the gates in Greek mythology is perhaps paralleled in the Ugaritic Aqhat epic, but the interpretation of the passage is not universally agreed.²⁴¹

The house of the dead

The Greek poets constantly refer to the abode of the dead as the *house* (δῶμος, δῶμα, δῶματα) of Hades, or less often of Hades' consort Persephone. The gates of Hades are understood as being the entrance to this mansion. In Mesopotamian tradition there were various expressions for the underworld in which it was designated as a 'house'. In Sumerian it could be called é-kur, 'house of the Kur (= earth/underworld)', or é-kur-idim(-ma), 'house of the distant Kur'. In Akkadian it could be called 'the house of Dumuzi', 'the house of darkness', 'the house of death', 'the house of dust', 'the farmhouse'. All these phrases contain the ordinary word for 'house', *bītu*. More closely parallel to 'house of Hades', however, are the phrases *mūšab* or *šubat* ⁴*Erkalla*, 'the dwelling of Erkalla'. Enkidu dreams of an infernal demon who attacks him and drags him off to the underworld:

He had me in his grip, he drove me to the house of darkness,
the dwelling of Erkalla,
to the house whose entrants do not go out ...

to the house whose residents are deprived of light.²⁴²

Erkalla comes from the Sumerian *eri-gal* 'the great city', and it is usually used as a place-name; but, like Hades, it can stand for either the place or its god. More often the lord of the underworld is identified as *Nergal*. Just as Hades is paired with a female deity of equal status, Persephone, so Nergal is paired with *Ereshkigal*, the mistress of the earth.

Similar notions about the 'house' of the dead are documented in the West Semitic area. A plaster inscription from Deir 'Allā in Jordan, dated to sometime before 800 BC, and headed 'Document (*spr*) of Balaam, son of B'r, who was a seer of the gods', tells how this seer, a figure known from the Old Testament, saw a vision in the night which afflicted him with grief and which he related to his people the next day. In it someone is doomed to pass over to 'the House of Ages (*byt 'lmm*), the house ...], the house where the goer does not come up and the bridegroom(?) does not come up'.²⁴³ Once again the Book of Job supplies a parallel in Hebrew:

For I know, it is to death that you will send me back,
and to the house appointed for all that live.²⁴⁴

A much commoner designation of the place of the dead in the Old Testament is (*haš*)*šāhat*, 'the Pit'; the word in its literal use means a deep-dug hole into which an unwary person or an animal may fall. We may compare the expression that Homer uses, not about Hades, but about Tartarus, the place far below Hades into which Zeus threatens to hurl any god who disobeys him: it is 'very far down, where the deepest canyon (βύθρον) below the earth is'.²⁴⁵

The house of the dead was not a desirable residence. It was notably dark and sunless. It is a commonplace of Greek poetry that those who die must leave the light of the sun. The ἔρεβος or ζόφος that they go to, whether or not located in the west, is certainly a place of darkness. It was the 'misty Dark' that Hades obtained as his province when the three sons of Kronos drew lots.²⁴⁶ The usual Babylonian conception is similar.

²³⁹ Ebeling (1931), 128. In the second line of the second passage 'enter' (*irubūma*) is perhaps an error for 'cross' (*libirūma*).

²⁴⁰ Ps. 107. 18, Job 38. 17, Isa. 38. 10, cf. Ps. 9. 14(13); Tromp. 152-4; Brown, 123 f.; already cited by Bogan, 44 f., Krenkel, 26.

²⁴¹ KTU 1. 19: 10 ff. See Caquot-Szzyrmer, 442; B. Margalit in Alster, 250. The attempt by Lewy, 228, to explain Cerberus' name from Hebrew *geber*, Akkadian *qabru*, 'grave', is not convincing.

²⁴² Gilg. VII 175-8, cf. *Descent of Ishtar* 4-7. For the rest see Tallqvist (1934), 25-37, and Jettica.

²⁴³ Hackett, 26, 30.

²⁴⁴ Job 30. 23, cf. 17. 13; Eccl. 12. 5, 'because man goes to his eternal house, and the mourners process round the street'.

²⁴⁵ Il. 8. 14.

²⁴⁶ Il. 15. 191, cf. Od. 11. 57, 93, 223, 20. 356, Som. 1. 19, Alc. 38a. 3, Thgn. 243, 708-12, 974, 1014, Aesch. Sept. 859, Ar. Ran. 273, etc.

In one of the Old Babylonian Gilgamesh fragments the hero explains why he wants to live and see the sun for as long as possible:

The darkness is empty; how can the light be compared?
When might a dead man see the sunshine?²⁴⁷

References in Babylonian poetry to the 'house of darkness', 'where residents are deprived of light', have been cited above. Job too has been quoted in part:

before I go, not to return, to the land of dark and blackness,
the land of caliginous gloom and chaos, that shines (only) gloomily.

In another passage the author speaks of the gates of death in parallelism with 'the gates of blackness', while a psalmist sings 'he has made me in darkness like the ancient dead'.²⁴⁸

It was a place devoid of music and conversation. The ghosts in Hades cannot speak to Odysseus until they have drunk of the sacrificial blood, a medicine to which they normally have no access. A sixth-century poet applies to death the epithet *λαβίφθογγος*, 'causing one to forget voice', another says that when he dies he anticipates lying below the earth like a stone, voiceless, and a third remarks that no one, once he goes down to the Dark, the house of Persephone, has any more joy from the sound of the lyre or the piper.²⁴⁹ When Enkidu ventures alive into the nether world, Gilgamesh warns him of various things he must avoid doing, or the ghosts will recognize that he is an intruder and seize him. One thing he must not do is make a (vocal) noise. The implication is that silence prevails there.²⁵⁰ In the Psalms we read:

If Yahweh had not been my help,
my soul would soon have taken up residence in Silence.

The dead do not praise Yah, nor any of them that go down to Silence.²⁵¹

'Causing one to forget voice': this was a place for forgetting everything. Achilles declares that he will not forget Patroclus 'so long as I am among the living and my knees can still move; and even if in Hades they forget the dead, I shall remember my dear comrade even there'. All

²⁴⁷ *Gilg. M.* 14 f.

²⁴⁸ Job 10. 22, 38. 17; Ps. 143. 3, cf. 49. 20(19), 88. 7(6).

²⁴⁹ [Hes.] *Sc.* 131, Thgn. 567-9, 973-5; cf. Mel. adesp. *PMG* 1009. From later poetry cf. Tynnes, *Anth. Pal.* 7. 199 and 211 (Gow-Page, *Hellenistic Epigrams*, 3615 and 3619), 'the silent paths of Night' (= death); Virg. *Aen.* 6. 264 f. *umbræque silentes l et Chaos et Phlegethon, loci nocte tacentia late*.

²⁵⁰ *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* 194; *Gilg.* XII 22.

²⁵¹ Ps. 94. 17, 115. 17.

but ways of Persephone, the queen of the dead, that she 'bestows oblivion on mortals, damaging their minds'. The Plain of Lethe (oblivion) appears as a feature of the underworld topography in Aristophanes and Plato, and the latter also speaks of crossing a River of the Hebrew poets too take notice of this aspect of death.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who will praise thee?

It is 'the land of oblivion', *'ereš n'siyyāh*. The dead know nothing more of events on earth.²⁵²

The underworld was also a place of accumulated filth and decay, like the tomb. Homer applies to the house of Hades the formulaic epithet *πυδῆς*, an adjective denoting the presence of physical corruptions such as mould or rust. When the gods engage in battle on the Trojan plain, the king of the underworld leaps up from his throne and runs out, afraid that the earth is about to be broken open and his grim reminders of decay, which the gods abhor, exposed to public view.²⁵³ The oriental parallels are not exact, but reflect the same general concept. The house of Ereshkigal, as described in a formulaic passage that recurs in several poems, is a place

where dust is their food, their bread clay ...
Over the door and the bolt is a layer of dust.

Ereshkigal herself says

For my bread I eat clay, for my beer I drink muddy water.²⁵⁴

In the Old Testament we meet phrases such as 'those who have gone down to the dust', 'dwellers in the dust', 'those who sleep in the dusty earth'.²⁵⁵ Baal's envoys to Death in the Ugaritic epic must set their faces

towards the son of the gods, Mōt,
within his city of the sewer (*hmry*).
A sunken place is the throne he sits on,
muck (*hh*) is the land of his inheritance.²⁵⁶

²⁵² *Jl.* 22. 389 f., Thgn. 705, Ar. *Ran.* 186, Pl. *Rep.* 621a, c; Ps. 6. 6(5), 88. 13(12); Job 14. 21, Ps. 9. 5 f.

²⁵³ *Jl.* 20. 61-6; cf. Hes. *Th.* 731 with my note, 739 = 810, *Op.* 153 with my note, *Hymn. Dem.* 482 with Richardson's note.

²⁵⁴ *Gilg.* VII 179-82 (cf. 188, 'the house of dust'), *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) III 3, *Descent of Ishtar* 8-11, 33.

²⁵⁵ Ps. 22. 30, Isa. 26. 19, Dan. 12. 2; cf. Ps. 22. 16, 30. 10(9), Job 7. 21, etc. See N. H. Ridderbos, *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 5, 1948, 174-8.

²⁵⁶ *KTU* 1. 4 viii 11-14 (= 5 ii 14-16). The passage follows on from the one quoted above, p. 152. Cf. Tromp, 7 f.

The exact connotations of the words rendered 'sewer' and 'muck' are uncertain. The first is interpreted on the basis of a later passage where the cognate *mhmrt* occurs in parallelism with the gullet of Môt, the similar word *mahāmōrôt* in Psalm 140. 11(10) signifying a place into which the poet prays that his enemies may be cast, and the Arable *hamara* 'poured down'. The second is used in another passage to stand for something abhorrent or worthless; it is presumed related to Akkadian *hahhu* 'sputum, mucus, phlegm', and/or *hahû/huhû* 'slag, dross'.

In this context we may further recall the Eleusinian (and perhaps not exclusively Eleusinian) doctrine that the uninitiated, or certain categories of sinner, lie in slimy mud (βόρβορος) after death; Aristophanes acknowledges 'and ever-flowing shit'.²⁵⁷ The fact that the Greek word for 'slag, dross', σκωρία, is derived from the same word that Aristophanes here uses for 'shit', σκώρ, tends to confirm that the Greek and Ugaritic texts are situated in the same general semantic field. Further, the word βόρβορος is used elsewhere by Aristophanes of the mud stirred up from the bottom of a pool; this corresponds closely to Ereshkigal's 'muddy water', *nu dalhûti*, literally 'stirred-up, turbid water'.²⁵⁸

The condition of the dead

As Circe explains to Odysseus, the seer Teiresias is the only one in Hades who is *compos mentis*; τὸ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀΐσσουσιν, 'the rest dart about as shadows'. They are feeble phantoms, sometimes referred to by the phrase νεκρῶν ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, 'the strengthless heads of the dead'. They have lost the power of human speech (except when poetic convenience requires them to make conversation). Instead they go about twittering (τερριγυῖαι) like disturbed bats in a cave; in the mass, their noise is like the screaming (κλαγγή) of birds.²⁵⁹

There is an Ugaritic text, concerned with cult ritual for the royal dead, which bears the heading 'Text for the sacrifice to the Shadows', that is, to the spirits of the dead.²⁶⁰ 'Shadow' does not seem to be used of the dead in Akkadian or Hebrew, though it is used in statements such as 'man is but a shadow', expressing his frail and transitory nature.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Ar. Ran. 145 f. (cf. fr. 156. 13, 'the River of Diarrhoea'), Pl. Phaed. 69c, Rep. 363c, etc.; F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*, Berlin & New York 1974, 103–7. It is not entirely clear whether the *borboros* from which a hero has emerged in Asius fr. 14. 4 W (*Jambi et Elegi* ii. 46) was of the underworld.

²⁵⁸ Ar. Eq. 866, *Descent of Ishtar* 33.

²⁵⁹ Il. 23. 101, Od. 11. 605, 24. 5–9, cf. 11. 43, 633; J. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, Princeton 1983, 85.

²⁶⁰ KTU 1. 161; de Moor, 166; P. Xella in *CANE* iii. 2062.

²⁶¹ See chapter 10 on Pind. *Pyth.* 8. 95.

As to the enfeebled state of the dead, we may quote firstly the Hebrew prophet who pictures the deceased kings of the nations greeting the king of Babylon in Sheol with the words

You too are made infirm (*hullêtā*) like us, you are become similar to us!

and secondly an Akkadian ritual text of Seleucid date in which Shamash is addressed as *rês ešimmu murtappidu ša dūtu lā paqdu*, 'helper of the wandering ghost who is granted no virility'.²⁶² The term *rp'm*, which was used in several West Semitic languages (Ugaritic, Phoenician, Hebrew) as a title of the dead or of a certain eminent class among the dead, has often been related to the verb *rāpāh* 'droop, slacken' and interpreted as 'the powerless ones'. However, there are rival opinions; many understand the term as 'the Healers'.

There is clearer evidence on the birdlike vociferations of the departed. In the formulaic Babylonian characterization of the underworld already cited more than once, the dead are said to be 'clothed in a garment of feathers, like birds', and Enkidu relates that in his dream the demon of death 'turned me into a dove [...] my arms like a bird'. In *Nergal and Ereshkigal*, after the lines

They are clothed in a garment of feathers, like birds;
they see no light, they dwell in darkness,

there are three lines missing, the second of which ended 'like doves'; the editors reasonably supplement 'they moan'.²⁶³

Isaiah prophesies to Jerusalem:

And deep from the earth you will speak,
and from the dust your utterance will come;
and your voice will be like (that of) a spirit from the earth,
and from the dust your utterance will twitter.

The onomatopoeic verb rendered 'twitter', *špšp*, is elsewhere used by Isaiah in bird similes. In another passage he refers to necromantic consultations of 'the ghosts and spirits that twitter and moan', *hamšapš'pūm w'hammah'gūm*.²⁶⁴ The second participle here is from the verb *hāgāh*, 'moan, sigh', which in two other places Isaiah uses of people moaning 'like a dove' or 'like doves'. These, then, were the sounds that the ghosts of the dead made at Judaean séances, and presumably in Sheol too.

²⁶² Isa. 14. 10; A. Falkenstein, *XV. Vorläufiger Bericht über die von dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut ... unternommenen Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka*, Berlin 1959, 36. 10

²⁶³ *Gilg.* VII 173 f., 180; *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iii 4–7; *Descent of Ishtar* 10.

²⁶⁴ Isa. 8. 19; the first passage is 29. 4. The bird similes: 10. 14, 38. 14.

Some are more equal than others

It is a commonplace that Death is the great leveller, that we all come to the same final destination. At the same time persons of imagination – poets and theologians – have a tendency to group the dead into categories and to make distinctions among them in respect of their situation or location in the other world. When Odysseus relates how the ghosts came up out of Erebus, he lists various groups to which they belonged:

young married women, young men, old men who had endured much,
tender girls with hearts young in grief;
and many there were wounded by bronze-set spears,
men slain in war, wearing their blood-stained armour.

The first to approach him is his late follower Elpenor, who broke his neck in falling off Circe's roof and who serves to illustrate the predicament of the unburied. Then, after Odysseus has spoken to Teiresias and to his mother, there arrive in a gaggle 'all those women who were wives or daughters of heroes', and he attends to them each in turn. Then come Agamemnon and others beside whom Odysseus had fought at Troy. After them he sees a series of legendary figures, Minos, Orion, Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, Heracles, each of whom has a different, unique weird to dree in Hades. Apart from these latter individuals, there is no suggestion that different sorts of people receive different treatment in the Homeric underworld, but it does look as if the poet to some extent thought of the inhabitants as sorted into groups, and as preserving something of what they were in life. The men killed in battle still wear their bloody armour; Teiresias still carries his mantic sceptre; Agamemnon is still attended by the retainers who were slaughtered with him; Achilles is a lord among the dead; Minos still hears lawsuits; Orion still hunts the animals that he killed in the upper world; Heracles still prowls about looking for antagonists. After Homer we meet a variety of philosophical and religious doctrines according to which people do as a matter of principle get very different sorts of afterlife, depending on how they lived, or how they died, or whether or not they were initiates of a particular mystery cult.²⁶⁵

In *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* and its Akkadian rendering in the twelfth tablet of the *Gilgamesh* epic, Enkidu's ghost informs Gilgamesh about the people he has seen in the underworld and the various situations in which they find themselves. There is the man

with only one son, the man with two sons, and so on, each enjoying a better lot than the last, until we get to the man with seven sons, who 'as a companion of the gods sits on a chair and listens to music'. Seventeen further categories of person were listed in the main Sumerian version, eleven of them still identifiable: the man with no heir, the palace retainer, the childless woman, the male and the female virgin, the man killed in battle, the man with no relatives to provide his ghost with nourishment, the man who fell from a ship's mast, the man who died untimely, the stillborn infant, and the man whose body was consumed by fire. In the Akkadian version the man killed in battle is followed by the man who lies unburied in the wild: 'his ghost does not sleep in the earth'. A divergent Sumerian version from Ur offers further items, including the man who fell from the roof, the man who had no respect for the word of his father and mother, and the perjurer.²⁶⁶ It is noteworthy that several of the above correspond to categories that the Greeks recognized as significant. Homer combines in the figure of Elpenor the man who fell from a roof and the one who is left unburied. When Heraclitus says that both gods and men honour those slain in war, this suggests a special posthumous destiny for them. Aristophanes specifies, among those recumbent in the mud and excrement, anyone who has battered his father or mother, or who has sworn a false oath.

One of Ezekiel's prophecies implies that different areas of Sheol are appointed for different orders of the dead:

Go down, and be laid with the uncircumcised.
Amid those put to death by the sword they shall fall ...
There is Assyria and all her horde, surrounded by her graves,
all of them slain, fallen by the sword,
whose graves are set in the furthest parts of the Pit ...
There are Meshech and Tubal and all their multitude ...
And they do not lie with the giant Heroes of old
who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war
and laid their swords beneath their heads,
while their body-shields cover their bones ...
So you shall be broken amid the uncircumcised,
and shall lie with those put to death by the sword.²⁶⁷

The idea that an earthly king retains his royal status in the other world also deserves comment. Odysseus felicitates Achilles on his

²⁶⁵ To look no later than the fifth century, cf. *Hymn. Dem.* 481 f., Heraclitus B 24–5, Orph. fr. 222 (cf. West [1983] 75, 98 f.), Pind. *Ol.* 2. 56–77, fr. 129, 130, 133, Soph. fr. 837, 'Pythagoras' ap. Ion fr. eleg. 30, Ar. *Ran.* 146–58, etc.

²⁶⁶ *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* 255–303; *Gûg.* XII iv–vi.

²⁶⁷ Ezek. 32. 19–28, cf. Isa. 14. 19. 'Put to death by the sword' may refer to the divine sword of judgment; see O. Eissfeldt in H. H. Rowley (ed.), *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to T. H. Robinson*, Edinburgh 1950, 73–81.

exceptional fortune: 'before, when you were alive, we Argives honoured you on a par with the gods, and now you grently lord it among the dead. This is the cue for Achilles' famous response that he would rather be a serf under the sun than king over all the dead. In Aeschylus, the deceased kings reign on in Hades.²⁶⁸ In the Ugaritic ritual text cited above it is presupposed that the late king will expect to carry on in the underworld in the manner to which he has been accustomed. Menus are taken to send his throne down after him for his continued use.²⁶⁹ Many centuries later the Hebrew prophet pictures the king of Babylon arriving below:

Sheol down there is astir for you to meet your coming;
it rouses the mighty dead (*rephaim*) for you, all the flock-leaders of the earth,
it makes all the kings of the nations stand up from their thrones.²⁷⁰

However, certain exceptional heroes of the past have been exempted from death altogether. Instead of going down below the earth like ordinary kings, they have been transported to a faraway land, beyond the reach of travellers, to live there in paradisiac seclusion. In the *Odyssey* this happy fortune is foretold by Proteus to Menelaus:

But for you, Menelaus, nurtured of Zeus, it is not destined
to die and meet your fate in horse-pasturing Argos.
No, the immortals will send you to the Elysian plain,
at the ends of the earth, where Rhadamanthys is,
where living is easiest of all for men.
No snow, no raging storm, no pouring rain,
but always singing zephyr breezes blow,
sent up from Ocean to refresh men. This they'll do
because you're Helen's husband, Zeus' son-in-law.

This Elysian plain corresponds to what Greek authors more often call the Isles of the Blest. There Hesiod locates an unspecified proportion of the men of the Heroic Age, saying that Zeus settled them there, apparently at the end of that era. By the sixth century Achilles, Diomedes, and others had found a place there.²⁷¹

In Mesopotamian tradition the hero of the Flood, named Ziusudra in the Sumerian version, Atra(m)hasis or Ut-napishtim in the Akkadian, enjoys a similar translation at the end of the story. The Sumerian text states that the gods

²⁶⁸ *Od.* 11. 482–91; Aesch. *Pers.* 691, *Cho.* 355–62.

²⁶⁹ *KTU* 1. 161; de Moor, 167.

²⁷⁰ *Isa.* 14. 9.

²⁷¹ *Od.* 4. 561–9; Hes. *Op.* 167–71 with my notes.

elevated him to eternal life, like a god;
at that time, the king Ziusudra
who protected the seed of mankind at the time(?) of destruction,
they settled in an overseas country, in the orient, in Dilmun.²⁷²

In the Gilgamesh epic Gilgamesh resolves to make the journey to 'Ut-napishtim the faraway', because people say that he has found eternal life. Ut-napishtim's home is indeed far away, beyond the sunrise and beyond the Waters of Death; but there he is found, living with his wife, and he relates the story of the Flood. In his account

Enlil came up into the boat,
he grasped my hands and led me up,
led my wife up, made her kneel at my side.
He touched our foreheads, stood between us, blessed us:
'Formerly Ut-napishtim was (of) mankind,
but now let Ut-napishtim and his wife become like us gods:
let Ut-napishtim dwell far away, at the mouth of the rivers.'
They took me and settled me far away, at the mouth of the rivers.²⁷³

Like Menelaus—who also presumably keeps his wife with him—Ut-napishtim is taken to live, not *with* the gods (as are Enoch, Heracles, and others), but *like* the gods, in a special place far from mankind, by the waters of World's End.

²⁷² Lambert-Millard, 144 f.

²⁷³ *Gilg.* XI 189–96.

4 *Ars Poetica*

In this chapter we shall compare the literary techniques employed in Greek poetry of the Archaic period, especially epic, with those found in the Near Eastern literatures. The similarities, or some of them, have not gone unremarked by classicists who have looked at these literatures or by orientalists with a classical training. Walter Burkert has recently put together a succinct but striking list of resemblances.¹ But they deserve to be explored at length and in greater detail.

ASPECTS OF STYLE AND TECHNIQUE

Burkert's first point is that Near Eastern narrative poetry, like Homeric, employs a long verse which is repeated indefinitely, without strophic division. This needs some qualification. The usual Semitic verse (we can use this collective term, since we find similar verse forms in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Hebrew) is rather flexible in length as measured by syllables. Most lines divide easily into two balancing cola, separated by a 'caesura'; some, however, seem to consist of three cola. Each colon normally contains two accented words or word-groups, but in some cases only one, or three. There is often parallelism of sense between paired cola or a pair of lines, or between couplets. A quasi-strophic grouping of lines may arise in this way. Some of the older Babylonian hymns are composed in quatrains throughout, and this is virtually true of *Enūma eliš*, which has a partly hymnic character.

In general it is the balance of phrases and sense-units that gives the verse its form. One may well feel a certain analogy between this type of verse, with its two balancing cola, and the Homeric hexameter, between, for example,

riṇnu ša Lugalbanda, Gilgāneš gīmālu emūgi,

the bull (son) of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh perfect in strength,

and

¹ Burkert (1991), 169 f.; (1992), 115–19, with references to other scholars.

υἱὸς τ' Αὐτοφόνοιο, μενεπτόλεμος Λυκοφόντης,

and the son of Autophonos, Lycophontes hardy in battle.²

However, there can be no question of deriving the hexameter metre itself from any Near Eastern source. It is too different in principle, with its measured patterning of syllabic quantities, from anything we know of in that quarter.

As the example just quoted indicates, Akkadian poets made use of ornamental epithets and appositional phrases to add to the lustre of a name or to fill out the line. The same is conspicuously true of Ugaritic verse and of the Hurrian poems that underlie the Hittite Kumarbi narratives. These embellishments are formulaic in character and often repeated many times in the same composition. Thus we are constantly reading of 'the warrior Enlil', 'the maiden 'Anat', 'princess Athirat of the sun', 'victorious Baal', 'Daniel the man of *rpū*', 'Kumarbi the father of the gods'. There are also recurrent epithets for certain cities, such as 'Uruk of the (broad) plaza' in the Old Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, 'well-watered Udm' in *Keret*, and phrases of general applicability such as 'the dark earth' (Hittite), 'the broad earth', 'the broad sea', 'the broad heaven' (Akkadian), all paralleled in Greek. There are verbal formulae occupying a whole line, for example to introduce speeches, to say 'When X heard this', or to describe someone's emotional reactions. Certainly we do not find such an extensive and flexible system of formulae as in Greek hexameter poetry; there was no need for one, as the metre was less demanding and the texture of the verse somewhat denser. But the similarity is there.

Also similar in principle is the structuring of the narrative by means of procedural formulae. What Walter Arend, who pioneered the study of typical scenes in Homer, wrote about the characteristic mechanisms of Homeric narrative, in which every event is prepared for:

Agreement is preceded by a proposal, action by deliberation, execution by a command or an announcement.³

is equally applicable to the narrative poetry of the Near East. Again and again the story proceeds through the sequence: description of situation—proposal for action—the action set in train. Orders are constantly being given to servants, and messengers sent on journeys with news, instructions, or summonses. There is much repetition of speeches, as when a messenger receives and then delivers his message, or when the same

² *Gilg.* I 133; II. 4. 395.

³ 'Der Zustimmung geht ein Vorschlag, der Tat eine Beratung, der Ausführung ein Befehl, eine Ankündigung voraus': *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Problemata, 7), Berlin 1933, 9.

request is made to different people successively. In general, speeches account for a large proportion of the bulk of each poem, just as they do in Homer.

The Greek bard sums up the range of his subject matter in the formula 'the deeds of men and of gods'.⁴ This too would be perfectly appropriate to the Akkadian and Ugaritic epics. In some of them humankind plays no part. But in narratives about men the gods are always involved, and in the more mythological as opposed to the historical epics the action moves freely between the divine and the human worlds, with reports of the gods' debates, disputes, and individual initiatives.

Generations of examination candidates have been, are now, and ever shall be invited to expatiate on Homer's use of the simile. It is a characteristic and striking feature of the Greek epic style. It is also characteristic of Near Eastern poetry, and we shall see that the similarities extend beyond general typology. Not only is there agreement in certain technical aspects, but many of the specific similes that we meet in Homer are paralleled in the oriental traditions.

How to begin a poem

When the early Greek poet is writing in formal mode, he begins by announcing his theme. He does so in one of two ways: either he calls upon the Muse(s) to sing or tell of *N*, or he says 'I will sing' or 'Let me sing' of *N*, using the indicative (present or future) or a volitive subjunctive (present or aorist).⁵

The first alternative has no parallel in the eastern traditions. The idea of a deity putting a song into a singer's mind is not unknown there, as we shall see in due course, but there is no deity specialized in this function, and none is petitioned for such a boon. The Muses are, so far as we know, purely Greek creatures, and have no counterpart in the orient. The other style of incipit, on the contrary, corresponds exactly to a form of opening very commonly employed in Akkadian poetry from the Old Babylonian period to the Neo-Assyrian, and found also in Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Hittite.⁶

⁴ *Od.* 1. 338; cf. my note on *Hes. Th.* 101 (West [1966], 188).

⁵ ἀείδω, *Hymn. Hom.* 12. 1, 18. 1, 27. 1, *Il. parv. fr.* 1, cf. *Alcm.* 1. 39, *Carm. conv.* 884, ἄρχου· ἀείδειν, *Hymn. Dem.* 1, *Hymn. Hom.* 11. 1, 13. 1, al.; κλήϊζω, *Lamprocles PMG* 735. 1; ἀείσομαι, *Hymn. Hom.* 6. 2 (ἀίσο-), 10. 1, 15. 1, al., *Alcm.* 28, 29; ἐρέω, *Il.* 2. 493; ἀρχώμεθ' ἀείδειν, *Hes. Th.* 1, cf. 36; ἄρχωμαι, *Hymn. Hom.* 25. 1; μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι, *Hymn. Ap.* 1, cf. 19 = 207; μνήσομαι, *Hymn. Hom.* 7. 2.

⁶ The following comparisons are partly anticipated by Dirlmeier, 24; M. Maróth, *Acta Antiqua* 23, 1975, 72–6; Stella (1978), 366–8; cf. Helck, 249. There is an extended study of the beginnings

It is particularly characteristic of hymns. As in Greek, the poet may say indifferently 'I (will) sing' (*azammur*; Akkadian does not distinguish between present and future) or 'Let me sing' (*luzmur*),⁷ and the verb may stand in initial position or follow its object. For example, among the incipits listed in an Assyrian song catalogue of the late second or early first millennium we find:

<i>luzmur Erra, dunnašu lulli.</i>	Let me sing of Erra, let me exalt his strength.
[E]nlibanda <i>luzmur ana ilāni.</i>	Of Enlibanda let me sing to the gods.
<i>zumar Ištar šarrati azammur.</i>	A song of Ishtar the queen I (will) sing.
<i>šurbūta ana niše azamm[ur].</i>	Of the great one I (will) sing to the people. ⁸

Outside Mesopotamia we find the formula in an Ugaritic hymn,

āšr nkl w lb ḥrḥb mlk qz

I will/Let me sing of Nikkal-lb (and) Ḥirḥib king of summer,⁹

and in several Hebrew songs of praise to Yahweh with the volitives 'Atīrāh 'let me sing' and/or 'āzammērāh 'let me melodize', and with the same variation as in Akkadian between initial verb and initial object.¹⁰

From its use in hymns the idiom was extended to narrative poems in which a god's triumphs were related. It appears at the opening of *Anzu*, where the structure notably resembles the proem of a Greek epic:

The son of the king of territories, the eminent, the beloved of Mami,
the mighty one, let me ever sing, the god firstborn of Enlil,
Ninurta the eminent ... let me ever praise ...
the waterer of steadings ...
the flood-wave of battles ... (etc.)
Hear ye the praise of the mighty one's strength,
who in his fury bound and fettered the Stone Mountain,
the overtaker of winged Anzu with his weapon.

The subject of song, Ninurta, is initially identified in a noun phrase and then further characterized by adding epithets and titles; within a few lines, in a relative clause, there is a reference to the specific achievement which is to be narrated in what follows.¹¹ We seem to have a similar

⁷ Akkadian epics by C. Wilcke, *ZA* 67, 1977, 153–216.

⁸ The same volitive construction is also used with various verbs meaning 'praise', 'honour', 'magnify'.

⁹ *KAR* 158 i 21, 41, ii 6, vii 27.

¹⁰ *KTU* 1. 24. 1. The verb form as written is ambiguous as between indicative and volitive.

¹¹ *Exod.* 15. 1, *Jdg.* 5. 3, *Ps.* 9. 3(2), 89. 2(1), 101. 1.

¹² *Anzu* (SBV) I i 1–11; cf. the openings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Stella [1978], 367).

structure in the extended prologue of the Gilgamesh epic. The restoration of the first two lines of Sin-leqe-unninni's version is not guaranteed:

[Him who] saw everything let [me te]ll the lands,
[of him who] knew [the entire]y [let me tea]ch his whole story.

But certainly the following lines go on to refer, in anticipation of the body of the epic, to Gilgamesh's journey to see Ut-napishtim, the survivor of the Flood. Lines 27–45, which probably correspond to the beginning of the prologue in the Old Babylonian version, contain, following a series of laudatory predication, a more explicit reference:

Trav]erser of the ocean, the broad sea, unto the rising of the sun,
insp]ector of the world's quarters, constant seeker of (eternal) life,
who re]ached by his strength Ut-napishtim the distant.¹²

The pattern 'I will sing of N, who ...' was taken over into Hurrini narrative poetry about the gods, as we can see from the Hittite version of the *Song of Ullikummi*. It begins in MS. A:

[Of him who ...]
in [whose] mind there is [...],
a[nd into his mind wisdom] he takes,
of Kumarbi [father of] all [the gods] I (will) sing.

In MS. B (which supplies material for filling the lacunae) the verb 'I (will) sing', *ishamihhi*, stood at the end of the first line.

In two of the Assyrian royal epics the 'let me/I will sing' motif appears in an epilogue, and is justified by the attribution of the king's victories to the gods. So in a broken passage from the end of the Tukulti-Ninurta epic:

Let me e[ver praise] the designs of the gods [...]
The ...] of the gods let me se[t] in the mouth of the people,
[...] to the bearer of the lyre l[et me ...]

And at the end of the little 'Hunter and Asses' poem:

Let me ever sing of the strong victory of Aššur, who goes off to
b[attles]
and achieves victory in every quarter.

¹² *Gilg.* I i 38–40. Similarly in the prologue of *Adapa*, of which the initial lines are missing, we are told in advance the main point of the story: 'wisdom he (Ea) gave him, but lasting life he did not give him' (fr. A, 4).

Let the earlier man hear it and repeat it to the later.¹³

In the ninth-century poem about campaigns of Assurnasirpal II the motif appears in the first line, and again with the initial emphasis on the god: 'I let me ever sing the king of the four quarters [= Aššur], the prince of all the gods let me praise'.¹⁴

From here a direct line leads to the Greeks, and in due course to *arma uirumque cano*. Of course, some sturdy sceptic may prefer to believe that the Greeks and the Semites arrived at this form of incipit independently. What is more natural, it may be asked, than that a bard who is about to sing a poem should announce 'I will sing of N'? But it is not 'natural', it is cultural. When Pope writes

Of gentle Philips will I ever sing,

or when Walt Whitman writes 'I sing the body electric', we recognize at once that these are reflexes of Classical tradition, and that the poets would not have arrived at any such phrasing without the Classical precedents. When we meet it in Archaic Greek verse, then, why should we be any less ready to acknowledge a borrowing from the Near East?

How to start things moving

A standard way of initiating the action of a poem is by describing an unsatisfactory situation which prevailed at a certain point in time, resulting in complaint to the gods, deliberation by them, and measures taken. At the beginning of the *Iliad* the priest Chryses stands wronged. He prays to his god, Apollo, who takes action by sending plague upon the Achaeans. Everything follows from that. There is a repetition of the sequence a little later, when Achilles is wronged and prays to his mother Phetis, who intercedes for him with Zeus. Zeus then consents to the plan which will govern the course of events in the poem. In the *Odyssey* the poet starts from the point where Odysseus is marooned on Calypso's island. At an assembly of the gods Athena takes the opportunity to complain on his behalf to Zeus, who gives his approval to her taking an initiative in the matter.

The assembly of the gods is itself a thoroughly Near Eastern motif, which we shall be considering below. Its appearance at the beginning of a story is paralleled in two of the Akkadian mythological epics, *Anzu* and *Etana*. In *Etana* the gods have built the city of Kish, and they are considering how to find a king for it. In *Anzu* they gather to draw Enlil's attention to the birth of the fierce bird-monster. The Book of Job is also

¹³ *Tuk.-Nin.* vi (B rev.) 30 ff.; *LKA* 62 rev. 7–9.

¹⁴ *LKA* 64. 1.

to be recalled in this connection. As soon as Job's original state of felicity has been described, we have an assembly of the 'sons of the gods', and there the decision is taken that sets the story in motion.

In the Gilgamesh epic the narrative begins with a description of the hero's overbearing behaviour and the discontent of his city, Uruk. The gods hear the people's complaints, and respond by calling upon the mother goddess Aruru to create a rival for Gilgamesh. The same pattern of grievance, appeal to a god, and divine response appears in compressed form at the beginning of the Nebuchadnezzar I epic:

Nebuchadnezzar sat in Babylon:

he kept raging like a lion, he was roaring like Adad;

his chosen nobles he made to co[wer] like a lion.

[His] entreaties were going to Marduk, lord of Babylon:

'Mercy for me! Torment and [...] ...'

He asks how long Marduk will go on dwelling in the enemy's land: he should return to Babylon and to his beloved temple Esagila. Marduk answers from out of the sky, encouraging Nebuchadnezzar to make war on Elam and recover his statue.

The two Ugaritic epics that concern human heroes are launched by similar means. *Keret* begins with an account of the king's unhappy plight. He goes to bed lamenting. El, his divine 'father', comes to him in a dream, asks what ails him (as Thetis asks Achilles), and advises him what action to take. *Aqhat* too begins with a portrayal of the hero's misery. Then, after Daniel has made offerings to the gods for six days, Baal intercedes for him with El, and the father of the gods agrees to alter the situation.

Of course there are individual differences between one poem and another. At the same time there is enough of a common formula to suggest that, in starting off their narratives as they did, the poets of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were, consciously or not, following a pattern laid down long before and far away.

Counting the days

Homer's narrative is set in a clearly articulated chronological framework. Between one phase of action and another, the poet makes night fall. Sometimes there is activity or debate during the night, sometimes everyone just sleeps. The new day is announced by a formula such as 'But when the early-born one appeared, rose-fingered Dawn', or 'Dawn the saffron-robed was spreading over all the earth'.

Akkadian epic is less concerned with counting the days. Often the action slides forward heedless of the calendar. Nights tend to be mentioned

only when someone is to have a dream in them. Nevertheless, there are places in the Gilgamesh epic where the arrival of a new day is registered, and the poet has a recurring formula for this:

munnišēri ina namāri.

At the first light of dawn (lit. upon something of dawn gleaming forth).¹⁵

We miss here, perhaps, the charming personification of Homer's Dawn with her pretty dress, Dawn who

sprang from her bed, from beside noble Tithonus,
to bring light to immortals and mortals.

However, we do find something of the kind in Near Eastern poetry in connection with the sun. A Sumerian poem has the more extended dawn formula

When dawn was breaking, when the horizon became bright,
when the birds, at the break of dawn, began to clamour,
when Utu had left his bed chamber,

and a Hebrew psalmist says of the sun, for whom Yahweh has set a tent in the heavens, that

he like a bridegroom comes forth from his chamber.¹⁶

Sometimes the poet wishes to report that a journey, or some particular situation, lasted for a period of days. He will not just say 'many days', but will specify the number. It is noticeable that there are certain favourite or formulaic periods. When Achilles threatens to sail home and says he should reach Phthia 'on the third day', it seems a reasonable estimate, and it may be a mere coincidence that both in Akkadian and in Ugaritic epic we find accounts of people travelling for two days and arriving on the third.¹⁷ Perhaps more striking is the recurrent motif that something goes on for six days and on the seventh there is a new development. There are four instances in the *Odyssey*. The men sail on for six days, and on the seventh they reach Telepylos. For six days they feast on the Sun-god's cattle, and on the seventh they set sail. And so forth. So in two passages of *Nergal and Ereshkigal*: for six days the two deities make love, and 'when the seventh day arrived'

¹⁵ *Gilg.* VII 78, VIII i 1, ii 24, iii 8, v 45, XI 48, 96; compared with Homer by Ungnad, 134, and others since.

¹⁶ *Il.* II. 1-2, *Od.* 5. 1-2; *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* 47-9 = 91-3, trs. Shaffer; *Ph.* 19. 5(4); cf. Brown, 111.

¹⁷ *Il.* 9. 363; *Gilg.* I iii 48 (cf. also IV i 4, X iii 49); *KTU* I. 14 iv 31-7, 20 ii 5 f.

the story moves on. In the *Ullgameš* epic Enkidu makes love to Shamhat for six days and seven nights, and then he goes off to seek his animal friends in the wild. For six days, in the Flood story, the storm rages, and on the seventh it blows itself out. For six days more Utnapishtim's houseboat rests on the mountain-top, on the seventh he sends out a dove. After hearing the recital, Gilgamesh slumbers for six days and is woken on the seventh. The same formula occurs in Ugaritic epic. For six days the gods' craftsman fires gold and silver to build Baal's palace, and on the seventh the fire is quenched and the work done. Keret must march for six days, and on the seventh he will reach Udm. He must sit encamped there for six days, and on the seventh the king of the city will be forced to negotiate. Daniel in the *Aqhat* epic makes offerings to the gods for six days, and on the seventh Baal intercedes with El. And so forth. The Old Testament too provides a couple of examples. 'The glory of Yahweh was set upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and he called to Moses on the seventh day from inside the cloud.' And for six days the ark of the covenant is carried round Jericho with a great blowing of horns: on the seventh day it is carried round seven times, the Israelites give a great shout, and the city wall collapses.¹⁸

The twelve-day period is also favoured in Homeric epic. On the twelfth day the gods will return to Olympus and Thetis will approach Zeus, on the twelfth day they decide that Achilles' maltreatment of Hector's corpse has gone on long enough, and so on. In Near Eastern poetry this does not seem to be as common as the seven-day period, but Enkidu's fatal sickness progresses for twelve days before he makes his last speech to Gilgamesh and dies.¹⁹

When the end of the specified period comes, the Greek poet sometimes states that it was at sunrise on the final day that the action took a new turn: 'But when the twelfth dawn after that came, then ...'. Similarly in several of the Ugaritic passages the decisive event is said to come 'with the sun (*špšm*) on the *n*th day'.²⁰

¹⁸ *Od.* 10. 80, 12. 397, 14. 249, 15. 476; *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iv 9'-14', vi 36-42, *Gilg.* I iv 21, XI 127, 142 ff., 199, *KTU* I. 4 vi 22-35, 14 iii 2 ff., 10 ff., v 3 ff., 17 i 6 ff., ii 32 ff., v 3; *Exod.* 24. 16, *Josh.* 6 1-20. We recall also that Yahweh laboured for six days on the creation and on the seventh he rested (*Exod.* 31. 17, etc.). Cf. S. E. Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (AOAT 204), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980, 192-209.

¹⁹ *Jl.* 1. 425/493, 24. 31, 664-7, *Od.* 2. 374, 4. 588; *Gilg.* VII vi.

²⁰ *Jl.* 1. 493, 6. 175, *Od.* 5. 390, *Hymn. Dem.* 471/51, al.; *KTU* I. 14 iii 3, 14, iv 46, v 6, 20 ii 5.

THE DIVINE COMEDY

In considering the activities of the gods in poetic narrative we must distinguish between those which are integral to the substance of a myth and those which arise from the poet's story-telling technique. An assembly of the Olympians in Homer is not a myth, it is merely part of his mechanism for embellishing the action and moving it forward. This is true of most of the gods' appearances in Homeric epic.

Homer's treatment of the gods is in general much more similar to what we find in Near Eastern narrative poetry than to anything warranted by normal Greek religious conceptions. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that the familiar Homeric motif of the gods' assembly is no less at home in Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Hurro-Hittite literature. Let us look at it more closely.

'Assembly' is more accurate than 'council', so far as Homer is concerned; Hesiod refers to the gods' *βουλή* as an institution,²¹ but the Homeric poet speaks of their *ἀγορή* or *ὁμήγουρις*, and of their being *ὁμηγερέες*. The gathering is thus described in terminology parallel to that for a civic assembly like the one which Telemachus convenes on Ithaca. Similarly the Akkadian texts refer to the *puhur ilāni*, 'assembly of the gods', and the Ugaritic to the *'dt ilm, dr (bn) il, pḥr* or *mḥrt (bn) ilm*, or *pḥr m 'd*, 'congregation of the gods', 'assembly of the (sons of) El/of the (sons of the) gods', or 'assembly congregate'. These too are terms appropriate to a political assembly. So are two of the terms used in the Old Testament for the Lord's heavenly entourage, *'adat- 'Ēl* 'congregation of El' and *q'ḥal q'dōšim* 'assembly of the holy ones', whereas *sōd q'dōšim/Yhwh 'ēlōah* suggests a private circle or company.²²

In the Near East mention of this divine assembly is not confined to literature, as it is in Greece. It appears in Old Babylonian and Ugaritic ritual texts, not in a functional role but appended to lists of individual deities to cover all who may not have been mentioned, as in Greek cult inscriptions lists of deities are often rounded off by 'and all gods and all goddesses'. Similarly in Phoenician inscriptions, such as the temple rebuilding inscription of king Yehimilk of Byblos, dated c. 940, which contains the prayer, 'May Ba'alšamēm and the Lady of Byblos and the

²¹ *Th.* 802, coupled with 'feasts'. Two lines later he mentions their *εἶσα*, '(places of) assembly, debate'.

²² See Mullen, 117-20. In the Deir 'Allā text (above, p. 159) the word used for the divine assembly is *mw'd*, which is the same as the Ugaritic *m'd*, 'congregation, convocation'.

assembly (*mphrt*) of the holy gods of Byblos lengthen Yehimlik's days and his years over Byblos'.²³

The Homeric gods meet on a mountain in the north, like the gods of Canaanite mythology (p. 112); and they meet in the house of Zeus, as the Mesopotamian gods meet in the house of their chief, Enlil. Sometimes they are simply found to be gathered there, as if it were their regular habit, but sometimes they are called together by Zeus.²⁴ So too in Akkadian epic: often the gods are ready assembled, without ado, but in some instances we read of their being convened. When Homer says

Ζεὺς δὲ θεῶν ἀγορὴν ποιήσατο ...
αὐτὸς δὲ σφ' ἀγόρευε,

Zeus set up an assembly of the gods ...
and he himself addressed them,

this corresponds almost word for word with a version of *Atrahasis* current in his time:

E[*n*]lil *iltakan puhurš[u]*,
izz[ak]kara ana ilāni mārēu,

Enlil set up his assembly,
he addressed the gods his sons.²⁵

And when we read that all the gods (apart from the absent Poseidon)

Ζηνὸς ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν Ὀλυμπίου ἄθροοι ἦσαν,
were gathered together in Olympian Zeus' halls,

this is closely parallel to the Akkadian lines

pahrūma ina kullati [Igī]gī
ana Ellil abīšunu, qar[rād] ilāni,

the Igigi gods were all (in a) gathered (state)
to Enlil their father, the war[r]ior of the gods.²⁶

²³ KAI 4 = SSI iii 18 no. 6. Cf. also KAI 30 = SSI iii 29 no. 12. 5 (Cyprus, epitaph, 9th c.), 'the company of the gods' (*h[br]ilm*); KAI 26 = SSI iii 52 A iii 19 (Karatepe, 8th c.) 'all the assembly (*dr*) of the sons of the gods'; KAI 27 = SSI iii 82. 11 f. (Arslan Tash, 7th c.), 'all the sons of the gods and the chiefs of the assembly of all the holy ones (*rb dr kl qdšn*)'; Mullen, 273 f.

²⁴ Il. 8. 2, 20. 4.

²⁵ Il. 8. 2; Atr. (SBV) p. 106 Lambert-Millard. Cf. also En. el. II 158 = III 60 = 118, VI 17.

²⁶ Od. 1. 26, cf. Il. 15. 84; Anzu I 21, cf. En. el. V 85, VI 69.

The assembled Olympians sit on seats. So do the Mesopotamian and Canaanite deities.²⁷ Sometimes they are represented as drinking and feasting. In the Homeric poems it is particularly when one of the gods is described arriving from outside that the rest are found to be drinking. It is similar in the Baal epic, when Yammu sends his envoys to the assembly of the gods on Mount Li to demand that Baal be handed over: 'The gods had sat down to eat, the sons of the Holy one to a meal', when they saw the envoys coming.²⁸ Descriptions of divine feasting appear repeatedly in Ugaritic and in Akkadian epic, though in most cases it follows a specific invitation from the chief god. They are generally very cheerful occasions.²⁹

At other times the poets treat the gods' assembly as a forum for deliberation and decision. We hear that 'the gods were debating' (*āgporōwnto*, Akk. *imtallikū*).³⁰ Not that it is a democratic body; it is monarchic. Sometimes the chief god simply issues his orders, and there is little or no discussion.³¹ Sometimes he invites proposals on what should be done in a particular situation; sometimes other gods initiate things by expressing discontent or making representations about some matter; but it is for the chief to decide on or approve any action that is taken as a result.³² Quite often he agrees to what a god wants done, or says 'Very well, go and do in accordance with your heart'.³³

The gods' deliberations concern major issues affecting their own way of life or the fate of a city or an important hero. To put it another way, when the poet reaches a critical point in his narrative in relation to such an issue, he may underline its significance and increase the dramatic effect by showing us that it exercised the gods. After Gilgamesh and Enkidu have killed the Bull of Heaven, the gods discuss the matter and Anu declares that one of them must die. Enlil decides that it shall be Enkidu. Shamash protests that Enkidu has only acted in accordance with

²⁷ Il. 1. 534 ff., 581. 4. 1, 9, 21, 7. 443, 15. 86, 124, 142, 150, 20. 11, 15, Od. 5. 3, Hymn. Ap. 4. 9, 12; Anzu I 154, Etana I 9, Nergal and Ereshkigal (SBV) v 38', 41', En. el. II 159, IV 15, VI 94, 165; KTU 1. 2 i 23 ff., 16 v 24 f. ('princely seats').

²⁸ Il. 1. 533/575 ff., 15. 84 ff., Hymn. Ap. 2 ff. (without an arrival: Il. 4. 1 ff.), KTU 1. 2 i 20 f.

²⁹ KTU 1. 1 iv 28 ff., 3 i, 4 iii 40, vi 40, 5 iv 11, 16 v 40, 17 vi 4, 108 obv., 114; En. el. III 8 f., 130-8, VI 70-5. So already in Sumerian poetry, as in Enki and Ninkmah 45 ff. (Jacobsen, 158, Bottéro-Kramer, 190; TUAT iii. 392).

³⁰ Il. 4. 1; Gilg. VII i 1, cf. Etana I 10.

³¹ Il. 8. 4 ff., 20. 13 ff.; Atr. II (SBV) p. 106 Lambert-Millard; cf. En. el. VI 17 ff.; Ps. 82.

³² Cf. Il. 4. 14 ff., 7. 443-63, 22. 174-85, 24. 23-76, Od. 1. 44-95, 5. 5-42; Lament for Ur 143-69 (Jacobsen, 456-8); Atr. I 41 ff., Anzu I 23 ff.; I Ki. 22. 19-22, Job 1. 6-12, 2. 1-6.

³³ Il. 4. 37, 22. 185, Od. 13. 145, 24. 481; Gilg. VI iii-iv, cf. Erra IV 138; KTU 1. 18 i 17-19, 1 Ki. 22. 22, Job 1. 12, 2. 6. This reflects the procedure by which a mortal official obtains a permission from his king: cf. Esther 3. 8-11.

Enlil's own word; shall he now die? But Enlil rejects the appeal. In the *Iliad* too we see the gods considering whether a hero is to die or be spared. In the case of Hector his piety is taken into the reckoning, but it does not save him.³⁴

While the gods recognize the power of their chief, they may give forceful expression to their disagreements with him. Sometimes a god or goddess is angry with him for (apparently) siding with his or her enemy, or threatens immediate hostility if action is not taken against an enemy.³⁵ Hera and Athena are angry with Zeus when he assists the Trojans, and Hera speaks out. Poseidon too (speaking to Iris, not to Zeus himself) is upset by the favour being shown to the Trojans, and threatens to nurse an implacable resentment. Helios threatens to desert the upper world and shine for the dead if Odysseus' men are not punished for killing his cattle. Similarly in the passage just cited from the Gilgamesh epic, Ishtar has threatened Anu that if he does not allow her to set the Bull of Heaven against Gilgamesh, she will let the dead out of the underworld and they will overwhelm the living. And in the Ugaritic Aqhat epic 'Anat goes so far as to threaten pulling El's house down about his ears and giving him a bloody head if she cannot have her way and put paid to Aqhat.³⁶ The portrayal of both these petulant goddesses seems to show a sense of humour not unlike the Homeric.

A god may take action behind his chief's back in obstruction of his plans. The chief is naturally angry when he discovers what has been going on. Hera and Athena ride forth to help the Achaeans withstand Hector, knowing that this is contrary to Zeus' policy, and Zeus is duly enraged. Later Hera distracts him with sex and sleep so that Poseidon may assist the Achaeans unhindered; again Zeus is furious when he realizes what has happened. Once before she had contrived to have Zeus put to sleep so that she could send a tempest against Heracles' ship, and when he awoke he had a fit. Prometheus gives mankind the fire that Zeus intended to deny them, and Zeus is angry when he sees that they have got it. So in *Atrahasis* Enki repeatedly frustrates Enlil's plans to destroy mankind by supplying Atrahasis with advice on how to meet each crisis. Each time Enlil is furious when he sees that his plan has failed.³⁷

³⁴ *Gilg.* VII i (the missing Akkadian text restored from the Hittite version); II. 16. 431 ff., 22. 167 ff. cf. 20. 291 ff.

³⁵ Considine, 107 f.

³⁶ II. 4. 20 ff., 8. 457 ff., 15. 184-217, *Od.* 12. 376-83; *Gilg.* VI iii; *KTU* 1. 18 i 6 ff.

³⁷ II. 8. 351-408, 14. 249-61, 292-15. 33, *Hes. Th.* 562-9; *Atr.* I 364-III 290. In a first-person narrative about his war with Elam, Nebuchadnezzar I is made to say that Erra (the god of war and plague) decimated his troops 'against the will of the gods' (H. Tadmor, *JNES* 17, 1958, 138; Foster, 295).

In the last of these episodes Enki is made to swear an oath that he will use his power to promote the proposed flood. The injured innocence of his response—

Why will you make me swear an oath?
Will I bring my hand against [my people]?
The flood that you speak [of to me,]
what is it? I [don't know.]
Will I give birth to [a flood?]

may recall that of Hera when she swears a solemn oath to Zeus that it is not through any intention of hers that Poseidon has been attacking the Trojans and helping the Achaeans: it must have been his own idea.

The motif of a god being put on oath is used in a different way in the *Descent of Ishtar*, where Ereshkigal is persuaded to swear that she will grant any request and then gets a request that she had not foreseen, with the result that Ishtar's body is recovered and brought back to life. This use of an oath in furtherance of a trick also has a Greek parallel, and again it involves Hera. When Heracles was about to be born she tricked Zeus into swearing that the man born of his line that day would rule the lands all around; then she accelerated the birth of Eurystheus and delayed that of Heracles.³⁸

Divine intervention on earth

The reaching of a decision by the gods is often followed by the departure of one of them to put it into effect. Sometimes it is a matter of communicating it to a mortal so that he can take appropriate notice of it. A god may come to the man as a personal messenger, or visit him in a dream. The protocol of messengers and dreams will be considered in more detail presently.

A less obvious means of communication is that the gods' discussions are overheard by a seer or witnessed in a vision or dream. The Trojan seer Helenus overhears, or somehow receives in his mind (σύνθετο θυμῷ), plans being made nearby by Athena and Apollo, and he is able to report them to Hector as a basis for action. In Homer this is unique, but in Near Eastern literature it is a recurrent device that can be traced from the eighteenth century on. In two letters of that date from Mari we read of prophets who had such experiences. One Shamash-na šir in the temple of Dagan at Terqa heard Dagan summoning the god Tishpak and telling him 'You have ruled the land (sc. Eshnunna) since ... But now your day is come, you are facing your day like Ekallatum.' The god Yakrub-il

³⁸ *Atr.* II 383-8; II. 15. 36-44; *Descent of Ishtar* 95 ff.; II. 19. 95-129.

then spoke up and said to Dagan 'An for Hanat, do not neglect the judgment you gave.' And one Qishti-Diritim, a prophet of the goddess Diritim, heard Ea summoning Asumûm, who came quickly and spoke to him. 'What Asumûm [said], I did not hear.' Ea sent for soil from the threshold of the city gate of Mari, dissolved it in water for the gods and goddesses to drink to confirm their oath, and asked 'Is it agreeable that we(?) diminish(?) the brick of Mari and the Guardian of Mari?' Thea replied that it was not. In the Gilgamesh epic Enkidu dreams that he is present at the gods' assembly and hears the discussion of his own fate: we are certainly to understand that this debate is not the product of his guilty imagination but one that the gods actually had. In the Deir 'Alla text Balaam relates to his people how the gods met in assembly and what was said. The Hebrew prophets too are vouchsafed visions of the heavenly ones debating human affairs.³⁹

The gods have other means of influencing people besides speaking to them or beaming messages into their minds. They can interfere with their state of consciousness, perverting their judgment or causing bad counsel to prevail in order that evil may befall someone. When Odysseus' men reject his well-founded recommendation to avoid the island where the Sun's cows moo, and vote unanimously to land on it, he realizes that his personal god (*daimōn*) is contriving harm for him. We may compare the occasion when Yahweh, desiring to bring evil upon Absalom, causes him and his followers to prefer the advice of Hushai the Archite to the sounder opinions of Ahithophel.⁴⁰

Alternatively, the gods can prevent people from taking cognizance of actualities by the simple expedient of putting them to sleep. When Priam makes his dangerous journey by night into the Achaean camp, Hermes puts the guards to sleep so that the old man may pass by unobserved. Just the same motif occurs in the story of Saul and David. David with one follower penetrates Saul's camp by night, finds his sleeping enemy, and declines the opportunity to kill him. The pair take Saul's spear and water jar and slip away. 'There was no one who saw it or knew it or woke up, as they were all asleep, because the slumber of Yahweh had fallen upon them.'⁴¹

A deity can alter someone's appearance by touching him. Circe can change people into pigs by striking them with her wand. By the same

³⁹ *Jl.* 7. 44 ff.; *AEM* i/1. 422 f. (cp. 196), 437 (cp. 208); *Gilg.* VII i (Hittite version); Hackett, 29, Zech. 3, Dan. 8. 13 f. In *Od.* 12. 389 f. it is amusing to see the poet realizing the need to account for Odysseus' knowledge of the conversation in heaven that he relates. He makes him explain, 'I heard about this from Calypso, and she told me she had had it from Hermes.'

⁴⁰ *Od.* 12. 294 f.; 2 Sam. 17. 14.

⁴¹ *Jl.* 24. 443-6, cf. *Od.* 2. 395-8; 1 Sam. 26. 12; compared by Krenkel, 35.

means Athena transforms Odysseus into a decrepit old beggar, and later back into a hale hero. Circe's trick is matched by Ishtar, who will 'strike' her lover if he displeases her, turning him into a wolf or a hog(?); Athena's is matched by Ea, who, to prepare Adapa for his visit to the gods, 'touched' him, giving him dirty, unkempt hair and mourning garb.⁴²

A god may appear to a mortal in person, or send a lesser divinity as a messenger. In the last book of the *Iliad*, for example, Thetis and Iris are sent by Zeus as his messengers to Achilles and Priam respectively, and each goddess tells the man she visits 'I am your messenger from Zeus'. So does the Dream that is sent to Agamemnon earlier in the poem. In *Adapa* Anu sends a regular envoy (*mār šipri*) to Adapa to summon him to heaven; if we had a fuller version of the narrative, he would no doubt have said 'Anu has sent me'. In the Old Testament Yahweh's Messenger appears to people on a number of occasions.

The divine visitor is often not recognized as such, or not immediately recognized. He or she comes in human form, and sometimes it is made explicit that this is an assumed form. Iris brings the Trojans news of the Achaean sortie in the likeness of Polites. Poseidon urges the two Ajaxes on in the likeness of Calchas. Hermes goes down to Priam in the likeness of a young prince with his first whiskers, and in response to questioning says that he is a Myrmidon, the son of Polyctor, and a member of Achilles' staff. Athena in the *Odyssey* adopts various male guises. Similarly in the Hittite myth of Appu and his two sons, 'the Sun-god looked down from the sky, changed himself into a young man, came to him and questioned him.'⁴³

Sometimes the visiting deity announces his or her identity, in most cases towards the end of the encounter. After having guided Priam safely to Achilles' quarters, Hermes reveals the truth:

Old sir, I am an immortal god come to you -
Hermes. My father sent me to be your escort.
Now I will go back, (etc.).

There are several examples in the Homeric Hymns and elsewhere.⁴⁴ There is a similar pattern, though somewhat obscured, in the consecutive stories of Abraham and Lot and their heavenly house-guests, who evidently, after receiving hospitality, revealed their identities. The

⁴² *Od.* 10. 238, 13. 429, 16. 172, 456; *Gilg.* VI 61, 76, *Adapa* B 16-18.

⁴³ *Jl.* 2. 791, 13. 45, 24. 347 f. (cf. *Od.* 10. 278), *Od.* 1. 105, 2. 383, 401, 13. 222; Hoffner, 63 (CTH 360), cf. 65 (CTH 363), where the Sun-god becomes a young man in order to speak to a cow.

⁴⁴ *Jl.* 24. 460 ff., *Od.* 11. 246-52 (= 'Hes.' fr. 31), *Hymn. Dem.* 268 (cf. Richardson ad loc.), *Ap. Hro.* 181 ff., *Dion.* (7) 56.

priestly redactor, who plays down the divinity of the 'messengers' accompanying Yahweh, has perhaps eliminated more explicit statements of the 'we are gods' type.⁴⁵ We find a more exact parallel to the Greek narratives in the late Book of Tobit, which is a pious novel set in eighth-century Assyria but composed in Hellenistic times, probably originally in Aramaic. In response to the prayers of two virtuous sufferers, Tobit and Sara, both Jews in exile, God sends the angel Raphael down to sort out their affairs. Raphael turns up at Nineveh, where Tobit lives; he is in the guise of a man, and under questioning he gives his name as Azarias, the son of Ananias, a member of Tobit's tribe. He then escorts Tobit's son Tobias on a journey to Ecbatana, where Sara lives, and this leads to their marrying. After bringing the couple back to Nineveh and imparting a cure for Tobit's glaucoma, he delivers a homily and finally says

God sent me to heal you and Sara your daughter-in-law. I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels.⁴⁶

A deity sometimes delivers information about the future birth of a child. Aphrodite reveals to Anchises after their love-making that he will have a son, whose descendants will rule over the Trojans; she also announces that his name is to be Aineias, 'because of my dire pain (*ainon akhos*) at having stooped to sex with a mortal'. Similarly a Messenger of Yahweh tells Hagar that she is to bear a son, and that his name is to be Ishmael (*Yišma'el*), 'because Yahweh [or rather El] has hearkened (*yīšma'*) to your affliction'. Abram is told that his name is to be Abraham, as the father (*'ab*) of many nations, for from him kings will come forth. Already in the Ugaritic epics we find El telling Keret the number and the names of the children that his wife will bear, and Daniel being told that he will have a son.⁴⁷

Sometimes the divine nature of the visitor is revealed only by the manner of his departure. After speaking to the two Ajaxes in his guise of Calchas, Poseidon flies away like a hawk, and they realize that it was not Calchas but some god. Athena performs a similar trick a couple of times in the *Odyssey*, with the same effect.⁴⁸ The angel that visits Gideon kindles a magic fire to consume the food that has been prepared for him, and vanishes; 'then Gideon saw that that was the messenger of

Yahweh'.⁴⁹ I cannot quote a Near Eastern parallel for deities turning into birds on leaving a mortal, but it is an accomplishment that they (like the Olympic gods) occasionally perform in other contexts. In Akkadian poetry and literary prose, when a city is destroyed, its gods often depart from it as birds. At the fall of Ur they 'turned into [bi]rds, flew off [like] [bi]rds', and when Marduk sent a flood upon Babylon 'the gods travelling within flew off like birds, they went up to heaven'. In a minute mythical narrative preserved in a Hittite version, Ishtar, overhearing the gods Elkunirsa and Ashertu plotting against Baal, turns to herself into an owl(?) and flies off to inform Baal.⁵⁰

On realizing that they are or have been in the presence of a deity, mortals are typically sore afraid.⁵¹ The deity responds to this, or pre-emptively, by saying 'Fear not'.⁵² The same formula is also used, in Greek, Akkadian, Old Aramaic, and Hebrew, when a mortal is anxious or in despair and a god reassures him: 'Fear not'.⁵³

Apart from their dealings with individual mortals, gods have an important role to play on earth as participants in battle, leading armies into the fray and fighting with them. We shall deal with this later when we come to the subject of battle narrative and the typical motifs employed in it.

Dreams

μὴ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διὸς ἔστιν: dreams too, in the view of ancient peoples, are often communications or signs from the gods. In literature they appear in highly stylized forms. In poetic narrative they serve a dramatic purpose, filling the recipient with hope, encouragement, or alarm, or providing him with guidance on actions he should undertake.

These literary dreams fall into two main classes. There is the message dream, in which a figure appears to the dreamer and delivers an informative and/or admonitory address in plain terms. And there is the symbolic dream, in which the dreamer sees or experiences some sequence of events that stands in a symbolic relationship to his own

⁴⁵ Jdg. 6. 21 f., cf. 13. 19 ff. (compared by Burr, 525).

⁴⁶ *LKU* no. 43. 8; Borger, 14 Episode 8; Laroche, 27 (Hoffner, 70 § 5; *CTH* 342). For Homer see Leaf and Kirk on *Il.* 7. 59; F. Dirlmeier, *Die Vogelgestalt homerischer Götter*, Sitz. Heidelb. Ak. 1967(2), and on the possible connection with bird epiphanies in Minoan and Mycenaean art J. B. Carter in *The Ages of Homer* (as ch. 3, n. 230), 287-92.

⁴⁷ *Il.* 24. 170, *Od.* 16. 179, 24. 533, *Hymn. Dem.* 281, 293, *Ap.* 445-7, *Aphr.* 182, *Dion.* (7) 48-50, 'Hes.' fr. 165. 4; *Exod.* 3. 6, *Jdg.* 6. 22, 13. 22, *Tobit* 12. 16.

⁴⁸ *Il.* 24. 171, *Hymn. Aphr.* 192-4, *Dion.* (7) 55, *Gen.* 26. 24, *Jdg.* 6. 23, *Tobit* 12. 17. Similarly in the familiar myth of the Nativity, *Luke* 1. 29 f., 2. 9 f.

⁴⁹ *Il.* 15. 254, 21. 288, *Od.* 4. 825; *Ludlul III* 35, *CPLM* no. 13 obv. 23 (Foster, 728), and other examples cited by Lambert, *BWL* 296; *KAI* 202 = *SSI* ii 8 no. 5 A 12 f. (stele of Zakkur, king of Hamath, c.780 BC); *Gen.* 15. 1, *Num.* 21. 34, *Josh.* 8. 1.

⁴⁵ *Gen.* 18-19. When Yahweh appears to Abram, he identifies himself at once: 'I am El Shaddai' (*Gen.* 17. 1, cf. 26. 24, 46. 3); so with Moses, *Exod.* 3. 6.

⁴⁶ *Tobit* 12. 14 f.

⁴⁷ *Hymn. Aphr.* 196 ff.; *Gen.* 16. 11, 17. 5 ff., cf. *Jdg.* 13. 3 ff., and Yahweh's assurance to David that his descendants would rule for ever, *Ps.* 89. 4, 29, 132. 11 f.; *KTU* 1. 15 ii 21-iii 16, 17 ii 1-8.

⁴⁸ *Il.* 13. 62, *Od.* 1. 320, 3. 372.

concerns. Such dreams are prophetic, and they need to be interpreted, whether by the dreamer himself, by a friend or relative, or by an expert. Both types of dream are found in Homer and in later Greek literature. Both have a long history in Near Eastern tradition.⁵⁴

The *message dream* is the more usual in Homer. The dream-figure appears to the dreamer in the person of someone known to him, but is in fact a deity, a phantom sent by the deity, or in one case a ghost from the dead. It can get into the bedroom through the tiniest aperture. It stands by the dreamer's head and addresses him (occasionally there is a dialogue), and then departs. Each of these points can be illustrated from Near Eastern literature.

1. A deity comes to the dreamer in person. Hermes comes to Priam in Achilles' quarters to urge him to get up and return to the city. Athena comes to Nausicaa to impress upon her that her clothes need washing. In the 22nd century Gudea, the ruler of Lagash in Sumer, set up a lengthy inscription celebrating his building of a new temple for the god Ningirsu; he records how the god came to him in dreams and gave him instructions. Several of the Mari letters report prophetic dreams in which a deity spoke to the dreamer. In the Keret epic El comes down to Keret after he has cried himself to sleep, approaches him, and asks what is the matter; then he tells him what to do. In the Old Testament we read that 'God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him ...', and similarly elsewhere.⁵⁵

2. The deity sends a simulacrum of a person known to the dreamer. Zeus sends Agamemnon a dream—in this case treated as an emissary called Dream—in the likeness of Nestor. Athena creates a phantasm (εἰδωλον) in the likeness of Penelope's sister Iphthime and sends it to the sleeping Penelope. The Hittite king Hattusili III records that 'my lady Ishtar sent Muwatalli my brother to Mursili my father in a dream', with a message in her name; in other words Mursili saw a likeness of Muwatalli, and this was a contrivance of Ishtar's.⁵⁶

3. A deceased person appears to the dreamer. Patroclus' soul comes to Achilles to request immediate burial. A Hittite text records a dedication of offerings on account of a dead person who had been neglected and who had appeared in a dream to the king. According to another a queen dreamed that 'something like my father had risen again'.

⁵⁴ See esp. Oppenheim (1956).

⁵⁵ *Jl.* 24. 682, *Od.* 6. 13 ff.; Jacobsen, 389 ff.; *AEM* VI. 471, 476, 479, 481; *KTU* I. 14 i 35; Gen 20. 3, cf. 31 24, 1 Ki. 3 5, 9. 2. Further examples may be found among the Egyptian, Hittite, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions quoted by Oppenheim (1956), 249–55.

⁵⁶ *Jl.* 2. 6 ff., *Od.* 4. 796 (cf. also *Jl.* 10. 497); A. Götz, *MVAG* 29(3), 1924, 6 ff. § 3, vs. in Oppenheim (1956), 254; compared with the Homeric passages, *ibid.*, 198.

There is also a dream of Nabonidus in which he saw his royal predecessor Nebuchadnezzar, who spoke with him.⁵⁷

4. The Iphthime-phantasm gets into Penelope's room 'past the latch-thong', that is, through the hole drilled in the door for the thong to pass through, and it departs the same way. In a bilingual hymn to Nergal it is said that the god's strength is overwhelming, and that '[he finds his way in] like a dream, at the door-pivot'.⁵⁸ This method of entry is connected with the conception of a dream as being in nature something like a breath of wind. When the Iphthime-phantasm leaves, it goes to join the breezes, Ἀἰδοῖθι ἐς πνοιάς ἀνέμων. When Athena comes as a dream to Nausicaa through the closed doors of her room, she approaches the bed 'like a breath of wind'. In certain Akkadian texts the god of dreams is named as Ziququ or Ziqiqu, which is derived from the verb *ziāqu* 'blow, waft' and means 'spirit, phantom, emptiness'; it is also applied to evil spirits that roam about on the earth. Like dreams, such spirits can get to people through the gap at the door-pivot or through other holes and cracks.⁵⁹

5. The dream-figure comes and stands by the dreamer's head. Homer has the formulaic line

and stood over (his/her) head, and spoke to him/her.

We find the same thing already in Sumerian dream accounts of the third millennium. When Ningirsu appears to Gudea,

at the head he stood, was briefly touching him:
'O you who are to build for me ...',

and in the dream account of Eannatum on the so-called Stela of the Vultures (c. 2500 BC) the god 'took his stand at his head'. In dreams reported in the Mari letters, similarly, the figure of a god or a man 'stood and spoke thus'. The righteous sufferer of *Ludlul*, Shubshu-meshreshkkan, reports a dream in which a tall young man of outstanding appearance 'stood over me' and then spoke. So too in the *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*: 'Ereshkigal in the night-time in a dream took her stand and said to him ...'. And at the prophetic call of the boy

⁵⁷ *Jl.* 23. 65; *KUB* xv. 5 iv 34–9, xxxi. 77 (*CTH* 583–4; cf. Oppenheim [1956], 193, 204); Langdon, 278 (Nabonidus no. 8, vi 12 ff.; Oppenheim, 250). The expression 'something like my father' in the Hittite text may be compared with *Od.* 20. 88, where Penelope says that in her dream 'someone like' Odysseus slept with her, τῆιδε γὰρ αὐ μοι νυκτὶ παρέδραθεν εἴκελος αὐτῶι. Who interprets it as a phantom sent by an unkind god.

⁵⁸ *Od.* 4. 802, 838 f.; Böllinger (as ch. 3, n. 58), no. 5. 49 (Seux, 80), compared by Oppenheim (1956), 234.

⁵⁹ *Od.* 6. 20; Oppenheim (1956), 232–5; *CAD* 7. 58. Cf. *Hymn. Herm.* 146, where Hermes slips back into his mother's cave through the latch-hole, 'like an autumn breeze'.

Samuel, 'Yahweh came and took his stand and called as before "Samuel! Samuel!"'.⁶⁰

6. When the dream-figure is not the deity in person, it may say who has sent it. The Dream that comes to Agamemnon, although guided by Nestor, says 'I am a messenger to you from Zeus', and the pseudo-Iphthime tells Penelope, 'Pallas Athena sent me to say all this to you'. In the three successive dreams of Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan the visitants say who has sent them, using the phraseology typical of messengers.⁶¹

7. The dream-figure's address is usually a monologue. Sometimes however, the dreamer replies and the other speaks again.⁶²

The *symbolic dream* is represented in Homer by Penelope's dream in the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*, where she dreams that an eagle comes and kills all her geese. The interpretation is, unusually, provided by the eagle itself within the dream: he announces that he is Odysseus and the geese are the suitors. Further examples are easily collected from later writers.⁶³ In Mesopotamia the symbolic dream is typical of narrative poetry, whereas the dreams recorded in royal inscriptions are of the 'message' type.⁶⁴ Dumuzi in a Sumerian poem has a dream that foreshadows his death. He calls for his sister to interpret it for him. Atrahasis receives some kind of warning dream about the Flood from Enki; the account of it is lost, but we can see that he did not understand it and applied to Enki for elucidation. There are a number of symbolic/prophetic dreams in the Gilgamesh epic. Gilgamesh has two that herald the coming of Enkidu; his goddess mother interprets them for him. He has three more on the journey to Humbaba's forest, and these are interpreted by Enkidu. In the Middle Assyrian version of *Etana* the hero has two or more symbolic dreams, the meaning of which is expounded by his friend the eagle. The hunter Kessi in the Hittite story has seven symbolic dreams in one night, and his mother interprets them. Everyone is familiar with the tale of the Pharaoh's and other Egyptians' dreams which Joseph explained.⁶⁵ As a point of poetic or narrative

style it is to be noticed that usually—the Homeric example is typical—the content of the dream is not related while it is happening, as in the message dream, but afterwards, when the dreamer tells it to someone else in the hope of having it explained.

A further convention is that the dreamer is often described as waking with a start after the dream. Agamemnon wakes with the divine voice all ringing in his ears, seized with the conviction that he will capture Troy that very day. As Patroclus' soul flits away from his embrace, Achilles starts up in astonishment. After dreaming of her sister, Penelope springs up out of sleep. So in Mesopotamia: Gudea 'rose, it was a sleep, he shuddered, it had been a dream'. Gilgamesh wakes in the middle of the night after a dream and says to Enkidu 'Didn't you call? Why am I awake? Didn't you touch me? Why am I disturbed? Didn't a god pass by? Why am I so debilitated?' After receiving advice from El, Enkidu awoke, and (it was) a dream; the servant of El (awoke), and (it was) a visitation'. And similarly 'Solomon awoke, and behold, (it was) a dream'.⁶⁶

Agamemnon's dream has an important function in the narrative. It influences events by persuading the council of elders to mobilize the army, which, as soon appears, is in a state of high discontent and ready to abandon the war. This was a motif many centuries old. In the Hittite version of the Sargon epic *Šar tamhari*, Sargon's army is reluctant to undertake the expedition against Buršahanda, until he tells them of a dream in which Ishtar has appeared to him and assured him that he will conquer the land into which he is marching. Again, it is recorded in Assurbanipal's annals that in his Elam campaign of c.656 BC, when he brought his army to the swift-flowing river Id-id-e, they were afraid to attempt the crossing, but 'Ishtar who dwells in Arbela caused my troops to see a dream in the night-time and spoke to them, saying "I shall go in front of Assurbanipal the king, whom my hands created". The troops put their trust in this dream and crossed the river Id-id-e safely'.⁶⁷

But Agamemnon's was a false dream, deliberately sent by Zeus to deceive him into entering a battle that was to turn out badly for him. This too has its parallel in the Hittite Sargon epic, for while Sargon gets a

⁶⁰ *Il.* 2. 20, 23, 68, 24, 682; *Od.* 4. 803, 6. 21, cf. *Il.* 10. 496; Gudea A ix 6 (Jacobsen, 399); Eannatum vi 25-7 (Oppenheim [1956], 189); *AEM* i 1. 479, 480; *Ludlul* III 9 ff., *CPLM* no. 32 obv. 35; *I Sam.* 3. 10. Cf. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1951, 105, 107.

⁶¹ *Il.* 2. 26, *Od.* 4. 828 f.; *Ludlul* III 15, 25, 42.

⁶² *Il.* 23. 65 ff., *Od.* 4. 795 ff.; *Ludlul* III 34; *KTU* 1. 14 i 35 ff.; *Gen.* 20. 3 ff., 1 Ki. 3. 5 ff. Sappho (fr. 134) told of a dream conversation that she had had with Aphrodite.

⁶³ *Od.* 19. 535 ff., *Stes. PMGF* 219, *Aesch. Pers.* 181 ff., *Cho.* 527 ff., *Hdt.* 1. 107 f., etc.

⁶⁴ Oppenheim (1956), 209.

⁶⁵ Jacobsen, 29-33; *Atr.* III 13, *Gilg.* I v 24 ff. (and OBV, Pennsylvania tablet), IV i-iii, *Etana* I Q (Foster, 446 f.); Hoffner, 67 f. (*CTH* 361); *Gen.* 40. 6-41. 32; cf. Joseph's own dreams at 37, 5 ff. and *Jdg.* 7. 13 f. The dreams of Enkidu in *Gilg.* VII i and iv and those of Etana and his wife in *Etana* (SBV) IV/AB, V/A (Dalley, 198 f.) are prophetic but not symbolic.

⁶⁶ *Il.* 2. 41, 23. 101, *Od.* 4. 839, cf. *Pind. Ol.* 13. 72, *Aesch. Cho.* 535; Gudea A xii 12 (Jacobsen, 403); *Gilg.* IV i 19-21; *KTU* 1. 14 iii 50 f.; 1 Ki. 3. 15, cf. *Gen.* 28. 16; Oppenheim (1956), 191.

⁶⁷ H. G. Güterbock, *MDOG* 101, 1969, 19 and 22; Assurb. A v 95-104 (Streck, 48; Oppenheim [1956], 249 no. 9). There are other examples in Akkadian epic of a king telling his troops before a campaign that a god has assured him of victory, but without mention of a dream. Zimri-Lim epic 145-8; Shalmaneser III epic, *CPLM* no. 17 obv. 17-25. Behind all this lies the historical practice of oriental kings' consultation of the gods (sometimes through dream-oracles) before a campaign. Cf. *I. Abat.* 254-8; Engnell, 63.

true dream, his enemy Nur-Dagan is sent a false one. Enlil appears to him and says 'Sargon the war-lord is coming against you in battle; (but) you have been given weapons by the gods. There is no one to equal you; your weapons are like a great wind, a terrible flood, a [...] water!' The text breaks off at this point, but Nur-Dagan was evidently misled by the deceptive message from the father of the gods.

THE INTERACTION OF CHARACTERS

Messengers

A conspicuous feature of epic narrative as it appears in Homer, at Ugarit, in the Hurro-Hittite tradition, and in Mesopotamia is the use of go-betweens to convey orders or news to an absent person, or to summon him or her to the presence of the original speaker. It is particularly conspicuous in those cases where the whole message is repeated verbatim, being given first in a speech of the sender to the messenger and then again in the latter's speech to the recipient. In certain circumstances the passage may appear more than twice. Agamemnon's dream, which is treated as a messenger sequence, with Zeus' words to the Dream being relayed by it to Agamemnon, passes before us a third time when he reports it to his councillors. In *Enūma eliš* a substantial suite of lines is repeated four times: first it is a piece of narrative, then a communiqué to Anshar, then a message entrusted by Anshar to his vizier Kakka, and finally Kakka's recital to Lahmu and Lahamu.⁶⁸

As an illustration of the similarity between Greek and Near Eastern epic in the way in which the messenger scheme can be used, let us take the episode in the fifteenth book of the *Iliad* after Zeus wakes up from the sleep into which Hera has enticed him. He tells her to go and command Iris (and Apollo, whom we will leave aside) to come to him. Hera goes off and tells Iris that she is to go to Zeus at once. Iris obeys, and Zeus then instructs her to go to Poseidon and convey to him the order that he must stop what he is doing (namely fighting for the Achaeans) and return to the gods, or else to his home in the sea. The message is taken, and Poseidon (with protests) does as he is told, preferring the watery alternative. In *Anzu*, after Ninurta has killed the monstrous creature, the gods decide to invite him to a celebration. Enlil speaks to his vizier Nusku, telling him to go and fetch Birdu. Birdu is then sent to Ninurta with the message that he should come. The

⁶⁸ Il. 2. 11-15 = 28-32, 23-33 = 60-70; *En. el.* I 129-62 = II 15-48, II 11-48 = III 15-52, III 13-66 = III 71-124

procedure is the same as in the *Iliad* passage: A (the father of the gods) tells B to fetch C, who is then sent as a messenger to D, who is asked to come.⁶⁹ In some other places we find the simpler scheme by which the chief god sends another to summon a third.⁷⁰

When Hermes functions as Zeus' envoy, Homer describes him equipping himself for the errand:

At once he fastened on his feet the fair sandals
ambrosial, golden, that bore him over the main
and the boundless earth swift as the blow of the winds,
and he took up the rod with which he charms the eyes
of whom he will, and others wakes from sleep.

The lines are also applied, with the appropriate substitution of a spear for the wand of sleep, to Athena when she sets out on a mission from Olympus. The motif is closely paralleled in a formula of the Hurro-Hittite poetic tradition. It occurs repeatedly in the *Song of Ullikummi*, and at least once elsewhere. Kumarbi, after meditating a plan,

promptly arose from his chair. In his hand he took a staff, [on his feet as shoes]
he put the swift winds, and from the city Urkis he set out, and to the Cold Mere
he came.

In other passages (from which the missing words in this one are restored) it is a vizier or messenger who takes the staff and the wind-shoes on starting a journey. The Greek god's sandals which carry him through the air with the wind are obviously a mere variant on the Hurrian idea of the winds themselves serving as the divine hiker's footwear.⁷¹

The basic pattern of the Homeric messenger sequence is that the messenger, having received his instructions, sets out, arrives at his destination, takes his stand in front of the recipient, and speaks.⁷² We see exactly the same pattern in the third tablet of *Enūma eliš*, where the vizier Kakka brings Anshar's message to Lahmu and Lahamu. First Anshar addresses Kakka and instructs him. The lines

i'ir, alik, Kakka, qudmšunu izizma
mimmū azakkaruka šunnā ana šāšun,

⁶⁹ Il. 15. 53-219, cf. 24. 74-140; *Anzu* III 40 ff.

⁷⁰ *Hymn. Dem.* 314 ff.; *Atr.* II 274-9, III 312 ff., *En. el.* III; *Song of Hedammu* fr. 9 (Hoffner, 50), *Ullikummi* I A iii 37-C ii 19 (Hoffner, 54 § 14-16).

⁷¹ Il. 24. 340-4 = *Od.* 5. 44-8; *Od.* 1. 96-101; *Ullikummi* I A i 12-16, C ii 33-4, A iii 39-41, C iii 4-8, III A i 31-2, ii 2-4 (Hoffner, 52-8 § 4, 9, 14, 15, 45, 48); *The Sun-god, the Cow, and the Fisherman*, iii 65-6 (Hoffner, 66 § 12); Dietlmeier, 26 f.

⁷² See Arend (as n. 3), ch. 2.

'Hie thee, go, Kakka, stand before them, and
whatever I say to you, repeat to them.'

are remarkably similar—even to the paired synonyms for 'go'—to Zeus's instruction to the Dream:

βάσκη' ἴθι, οὐλὲ "Ονειρε, θαὸς ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν
ἐλθὼν ἐς κλισίην Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδου
πάντα μάλ' ἀτρεκέως ἀγορεύεμεν, ὥς ἐπιτέλλω.

'Hie thee, go, pernicious Dream, to the swift ships of the Achaeans;
when you come to the hut of Agamemnon son of Atreus,
say everything accurately, as I instruct you.'

When Anshar has finished speaking,

Kakka went, he followed his road
to Lahmu and Lahamu, the gods his fathers.
He bowed down and kissed the ground before them;
he straightened up, he stood, he spoke to them.

And similarly in the Greek poem:

So he spoke, and the Dream went, having heard his speech,
and quickly he arrived at the swift ships of the Achaeans
and went to Agamemnon ...
He stood over his head ...
... and addressed him.

Because it is a dream, this particular messenger stands over the recipient's head, but the normal thing is to stand before him.⁷³

We find similar accounts in Ugaritic epic. When Yammu sends his messengers to the assembly of the gods to demand Baal, he instructs them as follows (the supplements are guaranteed by the parallel passage describing the execution of the task):

'Be up, lad[s], do not tarry;
then your faces] you must set
toward the assembly congregate wi[thin Mount LI.
[At the feet of El] you must fall,
prostrate yourselves before the assembly [congregate.
(Then) stand up and make your speech, repeat your knowledge.'

⁷³ Cf. *Il.* 1. 332, 9. 193, 11. 199, 15. 173, 18. 169, 24. 169, and for Akkadian epic also *Atr.* 1. 123/135, *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) i 29', iii 49'. The passages quoted above are *En. el.* III 11 f., 67–70; *Il.* 2. 8–10, 16–22. For the formula 'everything I say to you, repeat to him' cf. *Anzu* II 88, 103 f., 127; *Il.* 9. 369.

think in all carried out to the letter.⁷⁴

A further convention, a perfectly natural one, is that the messenger should be someone who has sent him. We have already taken notice of dream-messengers who do this. Another good example from the *Iliad* is when Zeus sends Iris to Hector with a message, and she begins her speech by saying 'Hector, son of Priam, Zeus the father has sent me to speak to you as follows'. Similarly in *Atrahasis*, when Enlil sends Nusku to the immortal gods to enquire who is their ringleader, Nusku begins 'I have been sent by your father Anu, your counsellor the hero Enlil, your chamberlain Ninurta, and your canal-controller Ennugi, (to say:) "Who is the leader of the mêlée?"'. There are other Akkadian examples, and more in Ugaritic.⁷⁵

Speech

In both Greek and Near Eastern poetic narrative direct speech occupies much space.⁷⁶ Message-sending accounts for only a fraction of it. At every encounter between characters, whether in private, in assembly, or in battle, their verbal exchanges are a major focus of interest. The gods are as loquacious as the mortals.

Action is often prepared for by means of speech in the form of a debate or a proposal. Besides the debates of the divine assembly, which we have already considered, there are others at the human level. In the *Iliad* Agamemnon holds a meeting of elders (βουλὴν μεγασθενῶν ἱερέων), and on other occasions the whole Achaean or Trojan army is called together to assembly (ἀγορή). In the *Odyssey* the Ithacans and the Phaeacians are accustomed to being summoned to assembly when there is some new situation requiring discussion.⁷⁷ In Sumerian and Akkadian epic, when the action is set in a city, the king sometimes consults the council of elders, though their prudent advice tends to conflict with his wild heroic instincts and to be disregarded by him. In the *Gilgamesh* epic, before embarking on his expedition against Humbaba, Gilgamesh lays his plan before the men of Uruk and asks for their approval. Enkidu urges them to dissuade him, and they try to do so, but he is determined to go. They give him further advice, and charge Enkidu to bring him back

⁷⁴ *KTU* I. 2 i 13–16 (≈ 19 f., 30–2); cf. 5 i 9–11, ii 8–15, 6 iv 30–2, 14 vi 35–8.

⁷⁵ *Il.* 11. 200 f., cf. 18. 184, 24. 133, 173, *Od.* 5. 99; *Atr.* 1. 136–40, *Anzu* III 58', *En. el.* III 13 f., 71 f.; *KTU* I. 2 i 33, 3 iv 7, 4 viii 32, 5 i 12, ii 10/17, 6 iv 34, 14 iii 21/v 34/vi 3, vi 39 f.

⁷⁶ Stella (1978), 364.

⁷⁷ *Il.* 1. 54, 2. 51, 53, 788, 7. 345, 8. 489, 9. 11, 18. 245, 19. 45, *Od.* 2. 7, 8. 16, 16. 361, 24. 420.

safely.⁷⁸ In what survives of the 'historical' epics we cannot identify any formal assemblies of this sort, but there are several scenes where a king addresses his warriors, and sometimes there is dialogue between them. The troops may be reluctant to undertake a long and difficult journey to do battle in a distant land, but the king's resolve prevails.

In both Greek and Akkadian descriptions of assemblies we note the procedural point that the speaker stands up to speak. We may compare

When they were all gathered and in assembly,
swift-footed Achilles stood up and spoke among them

with

The great Anunnaku were seated;
Enlil stood up, and the court [was in ses]sion:
Enlil [open]ed his mouth
and spoke to the great gods.⁷⁹

Sometimes a speech to an assembly meets with immediate and general commendation. Again parallel Greek and Akkadian examples can be quoted:

ὥς φάτ', ἐπήνησαν δὲ θεοὶ δωτήρες ἑάων.

So he spoke, and they expressed their approval, the gods, the givers
of blessings.

ina puhri ipula "anna"
rabūtum Anunna pāqidū šimāli.

In the assembly they answered 'Yes indeed!',
the great Anunna, the assigners of destinies.⁸⁰

Sometimes we are simply told that 'they hearkened' to the proposal and set about acting on it. Homer has the formulaic verse

So he spoke, and they hearkened to him and did as he said.

So too in the Babylonian epic.

⁷⁸ *Gilg.* II vi-III i 12 with the corresponding OBV (Yale fr.); cf. *Atr.* I 1372 ff., II 68 ff., III 39 ff. For Sumerian epic cf. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* 369 ff. (Jacobsen, 304); *Gilgamesh and Agga* 3 ff. (ibid. 346-8).

⁷⁹ *Il.* I. 57 f. (cf. 68, 101, 248, etc.); *Atr.* I 103-6 (cf. III 256, *Gilg.* II 280 (Uruk fr.)).

⁸⁰ *Hes. Th.* 664 (cf. *Il.* 7. 344 = 9. 710, 23. 539, *Od.* 4. 673, al.); *Atr.* I 219 f. (cf. *Anzu* I 163 f. = OBV).

The gods hearkened (*išmā*) to his speech:
they set fire to their tools ...⁸¹

On the other hand, a speech which announces or creates a new and awkward situation may be met with despondent silence; after an interval someone speaks, and the story proceeds. When Gaia produces an adamant sickle with jagged teeth and suggests that it might be used to give the sexual harasser Ouranos his come-uppance, her children are stunned:

So she spoke; but they were all seized by fear, and none of them
uttered a word. But taking courage, the great crooked-schemer Kronos
soon replied to his good mother.

There are more than half a dozen examples of this motif in Homer. Similarly, when the gods Adad, Gerra, and Shara each in turn reject Anu's proposal that they should fight the usurper Anzu,

the gods fell quiet and despaired of counsel,
the Igigi sat there fuming and flustered.
The master of intelligence who dwells in the Apsu, the shrewd one,
formed an idea in his wise belly ...
What he had formulated in his belly he spoke to Anu.⁸²

In many cases the decision on what is to be done requires a command to translate it into action. So at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, after fifty lines of conversation between Zeus and Athena, she makes the proposals that will set things moving. Let Hermes be sent to tell Calypso to release Odysseus; she herself will go to Ithaca to rouse Telemachus to purposeful activity. In due course Zeus instructs Hermes in this sense. We can find the same sort of pattern, A proposing action to B who gives the corresponding orders to C, in Mesopotamian epic. Thus in the episode from *Atrahasis* where the gods mutiny, Anu proposes to Enlil that he send Nusku out to question the mob, and Enlil then gives Nusku this order.⁸³

⁸¹ *Il.* 7. 379, etc.; *Atr.* I 63 f., cf. 400, *Anzu* II 28, *En. el.* VI 161, *Erra* I 190. Similarly in Ugaritic epic, after orders to a servant, we read that the servant 'hearkened' and carried out the order: *KTU* I. 4 iv 8, 17 v 21, 19 ii 5.

⁸² *Hes. Th.* 167-9 (cf. *Il.* 7. 398 f., 8. 28-30, 9. 29-31, 430-2, 693-5, *Od.* 7. 154 f., 16. 393 f., 20. 320 f.); *Anzu* I 153-8 (= OBV), cf. *En. el.* II 119-30, also *EA* no. 358. 12, 'the king fell silent; (then) he spoke'.

⁸³ *Od.* 1. 80-95 + 5. 28-42 (leading to a further sixty lines of dialogue between Hermes and Calypso, and as much again between her and Odysseus, before any action is taken); *Atr.* I 111 ff.; another instance *ibid.* 372 ff., see the next paragraph.

Another recurrent pattern comes into play when a large body of people has to be mobilized into taking some common action. The king makes a proposal in his council of elders; someone proposes that he should command the heralds to broadcast the order to the people; he does command them, and they do broadcast. We find this mechanism, slightly disturbed but basically intact, in the second book of the *Iliad*. On waking from his dream, Agamemnon orders the heralds to call the army to assembly, but first he summons a meeting of his elders, at which he proposes trying to persuade the army to go and fight. Later, following a chaotic general assembly and adjournment for breakfast, Nestor advises him to order the heralds to call them all out again for the serious business, and this is done. A thousand years earlier the same scheme appears, in a rawer state, in *Atrahasis*. On Enki's advice, Atrahasis convenes his elders and proposes to them that the heralds proclaim through the land the cessation of regular religious offerings except to Nantara. The proclamation is made and the measures adopted.⁸⁴

The reader of Homer soon becomes familiar with the stereotyped formulae which are usually used to introduce a speech. They often fill a whole line; sometimes there is pleonastic use of two verbs of speaking, ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν, ἔπος φάτο φώνησέν τε, and the like.

There is a corresponding repertory of formulae in Akkadian.⁸⁵ There are about seven that are used in more than one poem, and various others that appear in one poem only. The common ones combine the phrase *pīšu* (*pāšu*) *īpuš*(*am*), 'he opened (lit. did, i.e. activated) his mouth' with *izzakkara*(*m*) *ana* —, 'he spoke to *N*' or a variant of this such as 'to *N* he spoke' or 'to *N* he spoke a word'. After the Old Babylonian period a second verb of speaking is often inserted, for example

(X) *pāšu īpušma iqabbi, izzakkara ana N.*

(X) opened his mouth and uttered, he spoke to *N*.

The speaker's or the addressee's name may be accompanied by a conventional epithet, as in

Gilg āmeš ana šāšum issaqar, ana qurādīm šamši.

Gilgamesh spoke to him, to the hero Shamash.⁸⁶

The effect is quite reminiscent of Homer.

⁸⁴ *Il.* 2. 48–83, 432–44; *Atr.* 1 372–410.

⁸⁵ They have been catalogued by F. Sonnet, 'Die Einführung der direkten Rede in den epischen Texten', *ZA* 46, 1940, 225–35; addenda and further remarks in Hecker, 174–7. M. E. Vogelzang, *JCS* 42, 1990, 50–70, studies contexts. General comparison with Homer already in Fries, 379.

⁸⁶ *Gilg.* (OBV), Meissner fr. i 5/6. Cf. Hecker, 174. In Ugaritic epic the formula 'he/she raised his/her voice and cried' (direct speech) occurs over thirty times.

In the Hittite mythological narratives, too, we find stereotyped formulae introducing speech, generally

(*nu*) nom. (*utār*) dat. (*āpa*) *memiskiwan dāis*.

(And) A (words) to B (again) began to speak.

Speech-closing formulae such as 'When A had finished speaking his speech' or 'When B had heard A's words' are also common, as in Homer we have αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τό γ' ἄκουσε and the like.

Different verbs can be used for a wider range of expression: 'shouted', 'answered', etc. Sometimes, as in Homer, they are coupled with a verb of speaking. Apsu 'shouted to Mummu his vizier and spoke to him', *issima ... izzakkaršu* (direct speech follows), just as Hector 'shouted to his horses and spoke', ἐκέκλετο φώνησέν τε.⁸⁷ Homer's

τὸν δ' αὖτ' Αἰνείας ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε,

To him in turn Aeneas replied and spoke,

can be compared with

īpušuma Ea amātam iqabbišu,

Ea answered him and spoke him a word,

or less closely with Ugaritic

ḫb āliyn B ʿl, yt ʿdd rkb ʿrpt,

Victorious Baal replied, the rider of the clouds responded.⁸⁸

Or a line made up from a single 'answer' verb and a noun-epithet formula, such as

To him answered then the lord of men, Agamemnon,

can be compared with

(To) Anzu answered the hero Ninurta.

And there answered the noble Keret.⁸⁹

We also find the motif that a speech is *not* answered.

⁸⁷ *En. el.* I 30 (cf. *Anzu* (OBV) II 36, 43 f.; Hecker, 176 f.); *Il.* 8. 184, cf. 23. 442, *Hymn. Dion.* (7) 16.

⁸⁸ *Il.* 20. 199; *En. el.* VI 11, cf. *ibid.* 27, *Anzu* I 103 f. = 142 f., *Šar tamhāri* EA 359 rev. 6, *KTU* I. 4 iii 10 f., cf. 3 iv 21 f., 20 B 7 f. For comparison of Ugaritic with Homeric formulae cf. Gordon (1952), 93; I. McNeill, *An. Stud.* 13, 1963, 238.

⁸⁹ *Il.* 1. 172, *al.*; *Anzu* II 44 (= OBV); *KTU* I. 16 i 24, cf. ii 21, vi 54, 10 ii 3, iii 5, 14 vi 16, 133. I.

So she spoke; but to her Zeus the cloud-gatherer said nothing

Father Enlil gave him no speech of answer.

And in Ugaritic:

There was none among the gods who answered him.⁹⁰

Sometimes a speech is interrupted by an event. In Homer we find the formula 'Not yet had the whole speech been spoken, when ...'. This has its counterpart in a recurrent formula of the Ugaritic Aqhat epic, 'From his mouth the speech had not come forth, from his lips his utterance (when) ...'.⁹¹ Another idiom shared by Greek and Ugaritic is the marking of a new section in someone's speech by making him or her say 'And I will tell you something else'.⁹²

A typical device that we may find naive or quaint, though not unattractive, consists in someone's asking a question and suggesting possible answers to it, which the respondent then negates one by one before giving the true answer. For example, when Hector goes home to look for Andromache and finds her not in, he asks the servants where she has gone:

'Has she gone to one of her sisters-in-law or mine,
or to the temple of Athena, where the other
women of Troy propitiate the dread goddess?'

And the answer comes:

'She has not gone to one of her sisters-in-law or yours,
or to the temple of Athena, where the other
women of Troy propitiate the dread goddess:
she has gone to the great wall of Ilios ...'

The same pattern appears in Ugaritic and Hittite, for instance:

'[Is then] the king ill,
[or] is Keret your lord [sick]?'
[And] the hero Ilhiu [answered]:
'[By no means] is the king ill,
[K]eret your lord [is not sick]:
Keret is making a sacrifice,
[the king] is holding a banquet.'⁹³

⁹⁰ Il. 1. 511, cf. 4. 401, 5. 689, al.; *Gilg.* XII 62 = [69]; *KTU* 1. 16 v 12 = 16 = 19 = 22.

⁹¹ Il. 10. 540 *Od.* 16. 11, 351; *KTU* 1. 19 ii 26, iii 7, 21 f., 35 f.; Gordon (1952), 93.

⁹² Il. 1. 240, al., ἄλλο δὲ τοι ἔρρω; *KTU* 1. 4 i 20 f., 17 vi 39; Gordon, *ibid.*

⁹³ Il. 6. 374 ff., cf. 1. 65/93, 16. 36 f./50 f. (cf. Janke on 16. 7–19), *Od.* 11. 397 ff.; *KTU* 1. 16 i 56 ff., cf. 3 iv 4 ff., 10 ii 1 ff.; *KUB* xxxiii. 118 (Laroche, 74 f.; *CTH* 346) 15 ff. Exactly the same

Finally, in both Greek and the Near East speech format is used to present a character's inner thoughts. Instead of speaking to someone else, he 'speaks to his own heart'; the Homeric phrase is εἶπε πρὸς ὄνυχον ἑαυτοῦ θυμόν, or πρὸς ὄνυχον μυθήσατο θυμόν. Similarly in Akkadian when Siduri the alewife sees the unkempt and travel-worn figure of Ulysses approaching,

She debated and [spoke] a word to her heart (*ana libbiša*),
she with herself [took counsel]:
'Perhaps this man is an assassin ...'

A little later it is Ut-napishtim who has a talk to his heart when he sees Dabhanabi's boat coming with a strange passenger and an abnormal method of propulsion. Hebrew has the same idiom. When Noah sacrifices after the Flood, Yahweh catches the appetizing smell and 'said to his heart (*'el-libbô*): "Never again will I ...". In the Hittite texts the corresponding expression is 'N before his own mind (*istanzani-si*) began to speak'. The *Song of Ullikummi* provides several examples.⁹⁴

The address to the heart may also appear in direct speech. Odysseus says 'I endure now, my heart (*καρδίη*)', and Archilochus and others address their spirit (*θυμός*); similarly a psalmist sings 'Why are you laid prostrate, my soul (*napšî*)?'⁹⁵

Emotional reactions and gestures

A speech often produces an emotional reaction in the hearer. In Homer we are accustomed to finding speeches followed by such lines as 'So he spoke; and Achilles was filled with pain', or 'So she spoke; and the king was seized with anger at what he heard', or 'So said Athena; and he obeyed, rejoicing in his heart'.⁹⁶ The same kind of thing is common enough in Akkadian poetic narrative. 'Enlil heard that speech, his tears were flowing.' 'They heard this speech of hers, and they felt liberated, and kissed her feet.' 'Bel rejoiced at his father's speech.' And in Hittite: 'When Ea [hear]d the words, he became angry at heart.' 'When Sea

figure occurs in Old English and modern Serbo-Croat epic: Finnsburh fragment, lines 1–7; Sulejman Pušić, *The Capture of Budapest*, in M. Parry and A. B. Lord, *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs* (Cambridge Mass. & Belgrade 1954, 227; Alija Fijuljanin, *The Captivity of Osmanbey*, *ibid.* 315; Avdo Međedović, *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho*, *ibid.* iii, Cambridge Mass. 1974, 94.

⁹⁴ Il. 11. 403, 17. 200, al.; *Gilg.* X i 11 f. (compared by Fries, 379), X iv 13 f., cf. *Nergal and Ishtarkigal* (SBV) ii 21', *Etana* ii 99, *Erra* iii D 15, *BWL* 215 8, *CAD* s.v. *dabābu* 7; D. O. Edzard in Abusch et al., 149–62; *Gen.* 8. 21, cf. 24. 45, 1 Sam. 1. 13 (elsewhere 'in his heart', *b'libbô*; *Gen.* 17. 17, 27. 41, 1 Ki. 12. 26, Isa. 14. 13); *Ullikummi* I A iii 15, 27, iv 13, al.; Burkert (1992), 116 with n 13.

⁹⁵ *Od.* 20. 18, Archil. 128, Ibyc. 317b, Thgn. 213, etc.; Ps. 42. 6(5), compared by Bogan, 306.

⁹⁶ Il. 1. 188, 6. 166, 22. 224.

[heard] the words of his messenger Impaluri, he became angry in his mind.⁹⁷

Sometimes the emotion which someone feels on hearing of or perceiving a new situation finds physical expression. The following specific forms of visible reaction may be noted:

1. Change of complexion. When Paris sees Menelaus coming against him, he recoils like someone who has seen a snake and retreats, his limbs trembling, his cheeks seized with pallor. When Odysseus succeeds in stringing the great bow, the suitors are filled with dismay and 'all their complexions altered'. When the Locrian Ajax tore Cassandra away from Athena's statue, the angry goddess became literally livid. Similarly, when Ereshkigal is told of Ishtar's arrival in the underworld, 'her face grew sallow as cut tamarisk, her lips grew dark as the rim of a *kuninu*-vessel'. Contrariwise, when Apsu's vizier supports his proposal to do away with his sons against Tiamat's opposition, he 'rejoiced at him, his face lit up'. In the Hittite texts we find the formula 'and from anger his appearance changed', which presumably refers to a change of complexion.⁹⁸

2. Downcast eyes. When Hector's only spear bounces ineffectually off Achilles' shield, he is chagrined and comes to a halt with downcast eyes (σῆ δὲ κατηφήςσας). On hearing Anu's abject confession of failure against Tiamat, 'Anshar was silent, he was gazing at the ground.'⁹⁹

3. Biting one's lip. Several times in the *Odyssey* the suitors, on being sharply spoken to by Telemachus, bite their lips and are taken aback by his boldness. Shortly before the passage just cited from *Enanna eliš*, Anshar has received news from Ea of Tiamat's alarming activities: 'Anshar heard, and the speech was very disturbing; he cried "Oo-ah!", he bit his lip.'¹⁰⁰

4. Smacking one's thighs. This is another recurrent expression of dismay in Homer, sometimes accompanied by a groan, and always prefacing a speech. So in the *Descent of Ishtar*, when Ereshkigal is tricked into promising a boon and then receives a request she had not anticipated, 'she smacked her thigh, she bit her finger. "You have made a request of me that was not to be requested!"'¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Atr* I 166 f., 244 f. *En. el.* II 135, cf. I 41, 125, II 5, 49, 71, 153, *Descent of Ishtar* 28, 100, *Song of Kumarbi* iii 67 (Hoffner, 43 § 22), *KUB* xxxvi 25 iv 1 f. (Laroche, 73; *CTH* 346).

⁹⁸ *Il.* 3, 35, *Od.* 21, 412. cf. Fernández-Galzano ad loc.; *Alc.* 298, 25 Voigt; *Descent of Ishtar* 29 f. = *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iii 23' f., *En. el.* I 51, cf. 90; *Ullikummi* I A iv 39, II B i 2, 27 (Hoffner, 55-6 § 24, 31-2).

⁹⁹ *Il.* 22, 293, cf. *Hymn. Dem.* 194; *En. el.* II 119, cf. *Descent of Ishtar* 81.

¹⁰⁰ *Od.* I 381 = 18, 410 = 20, 268; *En. el.* II 50, cf. *Erra* 168.

¹⁰¹ *Il.* 12, 162, 15, 113, 397, 16, 125, *Od.* 13, 198; *Descent* 101 f.; cf. *Jer.* 31, 19, *Ezek.* 21, 12 (Bogan, 116 f.). In Sumerian poetry slapping the thigh has a different significance; it goes with

Homeric narrative does not rush on from one strenuous action to the next. The tempo is steadied, partly by the kind of substructions that we have been considering (day-night framework, preparatory debate, sending of messages), partly by allowing some space to descriptions of routine activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, sacrificing, reception of visitors, listening to singers. Such genre scenes, as we may call them, are less characteristic of Near Eastern narrative poetry, which, even at its most leisurely, is not conceived on such an ample scale as the Homeric epic and does not show the same degree of formal control. Nevertheless, we do find some passages that can be put under this heading. They are less apparent in Akkadian epic than in the more westerly Ugaritic and Hurro-Hittite traditions.

Feasting

Let us first take feasting. It has already been mentioned that the oriental gods are sometimes portrayed in this setting. Unlike the Homeric gods, they do not have special divine food and drink; the Akkadian deities dine on cereals, wine, and best beer, which they suck up through tubes, while their Ugaritic cousins regale themselves with mutton, beef, and wine.

In the latter tradition there are formulaic sequences of lines used in describing a feast, showing that we can treat these as stock scenes. One such sequence relates how the host

slaughtered oxen and sheep,
felled bulls and fatted rams,
yearling calves, skipping lambs, and kids.

We may recall from Homer how Alcinous, for instance,

slaughtered twelve sheep for them,
eight white-tusked boars, and two shambling oxen.

Another sequence describes the guests eating and drinking, being served a suckling, carving a fatted, and quaffing wine from cups of gold.¹⁰² Some passages refer also to musical entertainment. The fullest of the preserved descriptions merits quotation:

deciding to take action (cf. *Il.* 16, 125): *Enki and Ninmah* 25, *Descent of Inanna* 123, *Lugal-e* 72, 225 (Jacobsen, 155, 212, 240, 247).

¹⁰² *KTU* I. I iv 28-32 = 4 vi 40-3 = 22 i 12-14; *Od.* 8, 59 f., cf. 17, 180 f., = 20, 250 f., etc.; *KTU* I. 4 iii 40-4 = vi 55-9 = 5 iv 12-16 = 17 vi 4-6.

He stood up, he set the table and gave him to eat.
 He carved an udder before him,
 with a good knife he divided a fatling.
 He rose, he laid the feast and gave him to drink.
 He gave a cup into his hand,
 a goblet into both his hands,
 a great jar, mighty to behold,
 a cask (worthy) of men of the heavens,
 a holy cup, no woman can look on it,
 a goblet, no goddess can regard it.
 A thousand pitchers he took of the new wine,
 ten thousand he mixed in his mixture.
 (A singer) stood up, he recited and sang;
 the cymbal-clappers (were) in the bard's hand:
 he was singing, the lad pleasant of voice,
 about Baal in the recesses of Šapan.¹⁰³

The tone and atmosphere of this passage have much in common with those of a Greek epic banquet.

As in Homer, the arrival of a visitor may be the cue for the provision of food and drink. When Daniel sees Kothar approaching from far off with the gift of the bow, he calls to his wife to prepare a lamb, and the god is duly wine and dined. In the Baal epic, Baal sends for Kothar to commission his new palace; as soon as he arrives, he is given a seat and a meal, and only then does Baal speak to him about the palace.¹⁰⁴ This postponement of serious talk until after the visitor has been properly fed is in accord with Homeric etiquette.¹⁰⁵ We find the same conventions in the Hittite texts. For example, in the *Song of Hedammu* Kumarbi sends his envoy to summon the Sea on an urgent matter. The Sea goes, and when he gets there,

They placed a chair for Sea to sit in, and great [Sea] sat on the chair. They set a table for him laid with food. The cupbearer plied him with wine to drink. Kumarbi, [father] of the gods, and great Sea [sa] and ate (and) [dran]k.

Only then does Kumarbi instruct his vizier to bolt the door, presumably in preparation for the broaching of the 'urgent matter'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ KTU 1.3 i 4–22.

¹⁰⁴ KTU 1.17 v 9–33; 4 v 44 ff., cf. iii 40, iv 33.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. II. 6. 172 ff., 18. 382 ff., Od. 1. 123 f., 3. 34 ff., 4. 30 ff. (esp. 60–2), 7. 159 ff., 14. 45–7.

¹⁰⁶ KUB xxxiii. 122 ii 12 ff. (Laroche, 50; Hoffner, 50 § 9.3); cf. xxxvi. 25 i (Laroche, 73), Ullikummi I C ii 7 ff. (Hoffner, 53 § 8–9), Appu and his Two Sons I ii 12 ff. (Hoffner, 64 § 10–12).

The parallel between Homeric and Hurro-Hittite epic technique is even more striking when we encounter in both traditions the variation that the visitor declines to sit down or partake of the proffered hospitality because his business is too pressing. There are three instances of this in the *Iliad*, and two in the Hittite texts. For example, a table has been laid for Nestor and Machaon, and they are eating bread and honey with the odd onion and drinking wine fortified with flour and grated cheese, when Patroclus appears at the door. Nestor jumps up and urges him to join them, but he says 'No sitting down for me, old sir' — he has come to find out for Achilles who is the wounded warrior that Nestor is looking after, and he must go straight back. In the *Song of Ullikummi* the Hurro-god sees the stone monster growing in the sea and decides he must inform Teššub at once. When Teššub sees the Sun-god approaching, he

to Tnmišu began to speak: 'Let them set a chair for him to sit, let them lay a table for him to eat.' While they were speaking thus, the Sun-god arrived at their [house]. They set a chair for him to sit, but he did not sit; they laid a table for him to eat, but he did not reach out; a cup they gave him, but he did not put his lip to it.¹⁰⁷

They enquire whether he finds some fault with their arrangements for his comfort. There is then a gap in the text, in which he must have explained that he had first to impart some serious news. Subsequently he is persuaded to eat and drink before he leaves.

Dressing

Homer's descriptions of routine dressing when someone gets up in the morning are not paralleled in the Near East; this is the natural corollary of the fact previously noted, that the oriental poets are not in the habit of punctuating their narratives with routine nightfalls. Just as they only register significant nights, so they only attend to significant dressing. There is one particular context, common to the Mesopotamian, Hurro-Hittite, and Greek traditions, in which this occurs, namely when a goddess dresses and adorns herself in order to meet her lover or seduce or impress someone. This goes back to the Sumerian cult of Inanna and Dumuzi.

Inanna at her mother's bidding
 bathed in water, anointed herself with sweet oil,
 decided to put on for outer garment the grand queenly robe;
 she also took her man-beast amulets,

¹⁰⁷ II. 11. 644 ff., cf. 6. 258 ff., 23. 200 ff.; Ullikummi I A iv 41 ff. (Hoffner, 55 § 25–8), cf. Hedammu fr. 5 (Hoffner, 49); Webster (1956), 113.

was straightening the lapis lazuli stones on her neck,
and held her cylinder seal in her hand.

In the royal cult the king himself played the role of Dumuzi, and one of Shulgi's hymns contains an account of how the goddess adorned herself for him. Ereshkigal in the Akkadian poem visits the bath-house and dresses herself in a fine dress so as to arouse the desire of Nergal. In the Gilgamesh epic the hero's mother, the goddess Ninsun, washes and adorns herself before making an offering and representations to Shamash. We might expect Ishtar to perform her toilet before offering herself to Gilgamesh, but as he has just made his way back from a distant land with the severed head of Humbaba, his need of a wash and brush-up is the greater, and the motif is transferred to him: it is his spruced-up appearance that captivates her, instead of the other way round. Ishtar's Hurrian equivalent, Šauška, dolls herself up before going to try to enchant the monsters Hedammu and Ullikummi:

[Šauška] went to the bath-house [...] went to [wash], and she washed [...] She anointed herself with sweet fine oil, and adorned herself.

The corresponding Greek descriptions follow the pattern of the oriental. In the two fullest ones, the accounts of Hera preparing to seduce Zeus in the *Iliad* and of Aphrodite preparing to seduce Anchises in the Homeric Hymn, we find all four of the basic elements in the sequence seen in the Sumerian poem quoted above: bathing, application of perfumed oil, putting on a fine dress, and adding jewellery. In the Aphrodite hymn there is a striking further point of contact. The Sumerian passage continues:

The young lady stood waiting—
Dumuzi pushed (open) the door,
and like a moonbeam she came forth to him out of the house.
He looked at her, rejoiced in her,
took her in his arms [and kissed her.]

The description of Aphrodite's finery concludes thus:

And there were necklaces of great beauty about her soft neck,
fine, golden, and intricate; and like the moon
it shone about her soft bosom, a marvel to behold.
Anchises was seized with desire ...¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ 'Dumuzi's Wedding' ii 12–22' (trs. Jacobsen, 21), *Shulgi* X 14 ff.; *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iv 5' f., *Gilg.* III ii 1–5, VI i 1–5; *Song of Hedammu*, *KUB* xxxiii. 88. 8–10 (Laroche, 57; Hoffner, §0 § 11. 2), cf. *Ullikummi* II B ii 5 ff. (Hoffner, §6 § 35); *Il.* 14. 166–86, *Hymn. Aphr.* 58–65. 86–91, cf. *Od.* 8. 363–6.

Here we have the very same simile used in the Greek poem as in the far older Sumerian.

Chariot journeys

Walter Arend devoted the fourth chapter of his monograph on typical scenes in Homer to journeys by ship and by chariot. Sea journeys play no part in the Near Eastern poetic traditions, but the Ugaritic texts do present us with a couple of chariot journeys. It is not out of place to compare their use of this motif with Homer's.

The basic pattern followed by the Homeric poet is that first the horses are yoked to the vehicle, then the driver and companion mount, he takes the reins and applies the goad, the steeds fly along with a will (τὸ δ' οὐκ ἄκοντε παρέσθην); there is an indication of the direction taken, but no account of the scenery or of places passed on the way; the destination is reached without ado, and the horses are brought to a standstill. Sometimes it is added that they were then unharnessed and fed.¹⁰⁹

In Ugaritic we have two parallel descriptions of the divine Healer heroes (*rpām*) coming by chariot to Daniel's palace in response to his prayer or conjuration. The lines read:

They] harnessed [the steeds,] they yoked the horses, the [...]
they mounted the chariots, they depa[r]ted from] their city.
They journeyed for a day, and a second;
then at su[n(rise)] on the third
the Healers were arrived at the threshing-floors,
the di[vine ones at] the plantations.¹¹⁰

This resembles especially the account of Telemachus' and Pisistratus' ride from Pylos to Sparta in the third book of the *Odyssey* (478 ff.), as a selective quotation will bring out:

Quickly they yoked the swift steeds to the chariot . . .
Telemachus mounted the handsome car,
and Nestor's son Pisistratus beside him . . .
... and they (the horses) left Pylos' steep city.
All day long they were shaking the yoke ...
The sun set ...
They reached Pherae ...
There they slept the night ...

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Il.* 3. 259–66, 5. 720 ff., 768 ff., 8. 41–50, 382–435, *Od.* 3. 475–88, 492–4. 42, 15. 143–216.

¹¹⁰ *KTU* 1. 20 ii 3–7 ≈ 22 ii 22–6 (Caquot–Sznycer, 473, 478; Margalit, 466).

When dawn comes, they yoke the horses again, mount the chariot, and drive for a second day—six lines suffice for all this—reaching their destination at dusk.

Chariot travel in the Ugaritic corpus seems to be a specialty of the Healer heroes, who perhaps embody recollections of the professional chariot warriors who revolutionized warfare in the Near East in the mid-second millennium.¹¹¹ Elsewhere both gods and mortals ride on donkeys. For this too there are formulaic sequences, which to some extent resemble those used for a chariot journey. The saddling and harnessing of the animal are carried out by a subordinate in response to a command, and receive as much attention as the journey itself. Then the rider is helped onto the donkey's back, and almost at once he is at his destination.¹¹²

BATTLE NARRATIVE

In the reporting of battles there is a mighty difference between the poet and the war correspondent. The poet is concerned to glorify particular persons and to achieve particular effects. He has at his disposal a variety of conventional means and motifs with which to pursue these aims. As regards Greek epic, we have plenty of material for the study of his techniques. We are not so well off with regard to the Near East. The Akkadian 'historical' epics are not well preserved; in any case, they were mostly quite short and did not dwell on the actual fighting of such battles as they record. We do, however, have fuller narrations of certain gods' battles against monstrous opponents, as well as of Gilgamesh's and Enkidu's against Humbaba, and these supply some material for comparison. So do the Assyrian royal inscriptions, especially those of Sargon II and his successors. In addition the war narratives of the Old Testament, even if there is no background of epic poetry behind them, provide useful supplementary evidence for West Semitic literary traditions and techniques.

Using the scene

In the case of a prolonged war, perhaps one lasting many years, the poet usually focusses on the most dramatic part, that is, the decisive final episode, passing briefly over the long stretches of inconclusive conflict that preceded it. Not only the *Iliad* but also the *Aethiopis*, *Little Iliad*, and *Pharsalia* are set in the last weeks of a ten-year war; the poet of the *Septuaginta* found little with which to fill the first nine years. Hesiod's *Works and Days* too lasts for ten years, and he relates only the events of the final day. As a parallel we may perhaps cite the Akkadian fragment on the siege of Uruk.¹¹³ It begins with a vivid description of the misery and desperation of the city. Then we read (lines 15 ff.):

For three years the foe surrounded Uruk;
the gates were bolted, the locks in place;
Ishtar did not set her head at the enemy.

Enlil opened his mouth and spoke,
[to Ishtar the queen he addressed his words.
['Uruk] is my heart, Nippur my hands,
[Borsippa] my [...], Babylon my house of joy ...'

[evidently there was no attempt to narrate the day-to-day incidents of the three-year siege, only to give a general characterization of its effect. The transition to the decisive concluding action is made as Homer might have made it, with one god speaking to another. We recall the beginning of the *Odyssey*: Odysseus has been stranded on Calypso's island for seven years, and now Athena speaks to Zeus about it.

It is a recurrent motif that the king addresses his army before the engagement. Sometimes they are reluctant to follow him, but he overcomes their reluctance by assuring them that they have the gods' support and encouragement. Some of the Akkadian examples have been mentioned above in the discussion of dreams, and others can be cited.¹¹⁴ In the *Iliad* Agamemnon calls his troops together before the first morning's battle and addresses them. We expect him to inspire them by telling them of his dream, in which Zeus has apparently promised him immediate victory, but he curiously fails to do so. Instead Homer makes him deliver a thoroughly pessimistic speech, recommending that they abandon the war and go home. This allows their lack of will for the fight to emerge dramatically: they stampede for the ships. The setback,

¹¹¹ Cf. Margalit, 467, and on the advent of chariot warfare R. Drews, *The Coming of the Greeks*, 74–120; *The End of the Bronze Age*, 104–34.

¹¹² *KTU* 1. 4 iv 1–24, 19 ii 1–12. The nearest to this in Homer is Nausicaa's use of a mule-cart on her washing expedition, *Od.* 6. 57–84, 252–4 + 316–20, which follows the pattern of a chariot journey. Donkeys and mules are beneath the dignity of heroes let alone gods. It is noteworthy that although Priam needs a mule-cart to transport Hector's ransom, he himself rides in a horse-drawn chariot, *Il.* 24. 279/322.

¹¹³ See chapter 2, n. 37.

¹¹⁴ Above, p. 189 with n. 67. See also fragments of *Sar tanhâri* in Foster, 100–2, 251–3; *Tuk. - Nin. v* (A rev.) 10' ff. (Foster, 224: refers back to a preceding speech by the king); *LKA* 62 ('Hunter and Asses') obv. 18–20 (Foster, 248).

however, is only temporary, and later speeches by Odysseus, Nestor, and Agamemnon restore their morale.

The justification given for Agamemnon's paradoxical pessimism is that he wishes to 'test' the army, 'as is the proper custom'. Was there ever such a custom, in life or letters? It would not seem a very sensible one. Yet we find a clear parallel in the Book of Judges. The Israelites under Gideon were ranged against their oppressors, the Midianites. They were a large army, and Yahweh was afraid that he might not get the credit for an Israelite victory unless the odds were altered, so he told Gideon to address them and say, 'Whoever is fearful or afraid can go back'. Gideon 'tested' them, and out of 32,000 men no less than 22,000 took the opportunity to depart.¹¹⁵

Before the fighting in the *Iliad* begins, there is a further preliminary: a catalogue of the forces involved. This is not the isolated accommodation of a 'traditional document', but a feature of the epic poet's technique for launching battle narrative. There are further examples in the *Iliad* itself.¹¹⁶ It is perhaps a natural device in an epic about a heroic enterprise in which contingents from many different places take part, and parallels can be found in more recent European traditions, for example in Serbo-Croat epics and in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. But there are excellent early parallels in the Old Testament, suggesting that the practice may have had a basis in Near Eastern tradition. The oldest appears in the heroic ballad said to have been sung by Deborah and Barak, often dated to the eleventh century. The most extensive appear in the prose chronicle. Before the people of Israel go forth from Sinai to invade Canaan, Yahweh prompts Moses to take a census of all the fighting men, tribe by tribe and family by family—just as the Homeric catalogue is heralded by Nestor's advice to Agamemnon to organize the men by tribes and phratries. The tribes are then listed with their total numbers and arranged in camps in due order. Presently they set out, one after another, and are listed again with their leaders.¹¹⁷ This is all to be read as part of the saga of conquest. We may also refer to the inscriptional account of Sennacherib's victory at the Battle of Halule in 691 BC. The battle is prefaced by a catalogue of the enemy's allies, amounting to twenty-four contingents.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ H. 2. 73; Jdg. 7. 2 f., where 'tested' is a probable emendation of a corrupt text. The verb, *šārap*, means literally 'smelt, refine', i.e. separate the gold from the dross.

¹¹⁶ The *teikhoskopia* in 3. 161–244 and the *epipoleis* in 4. 250–421 are supplementary catalogues in different format; then there is the Myrmidon catalogue at 16. 155–97.

¹¹⁷ Jdg. 5. 13–18; Num. 1–2, continued at 10. 13–28; cf. 26. 1–51, 1 Chr. 12. 23–37.

¹¹⁸ Chicago Prism, v. 43 ff.

The role of the gods

The Israelite wars were conducted under the guidance of Yahweh; indeed they were once called the Wars of Yahweh.¹¹⁹ He could even be represented as fighting on the ground with his protégés.

Thou with thy hand drovest out the nations ...
for not with their sword did they win the land,
and their arm did not bring them salvation,
but thy right hand and thy arm ...
But thou hast betrayed us and put us to shame
and not gone forth in our armies.¹²⁰

The idea of the gods leading armies into battle was in fact long established throughout the Near East, and a regular theme in royal propaganda.¹²¹ It was given physical expression in the practice of carrying the gods' images before and beside the king. The Hittite kings regularly claimed that the gods accompanied them to the field; for instance, Mursili II repeatedly states in his annals that when he went to battle 'my lady the Sun-goddess of Arinna and my lord Nergal and Mezzulla and all the gods ran before me'. The motif is common in the Assyrian royal annals from the time of Adad-nerari I (1295–1264). In the epics it takes on a full dramatic colour:

The battle-lines were drawn up, on the field of strife the combat was established.
Fierce frenzy prevailed; the servants were quivering among them.
Assur advanced in front, the fire of defeat flared on the foe;
Enlil [...] the midst of the enemy, he sent flaming arrows smoking;
Anu applied the unsparing mace to the wicked;
the heavenly light Sin laid on them the paralysis of battle,
Adad the hero made a wind, a flood pour forth over their fighting;
Shamash, the lord of judgment, dimmed the eyes of the troops of Sumer and Akkad;
Ninurta the warrior, first among the gods, smashed their weapons,
and Ishtar beat her spinning-top, changed their warriors' spirit.
Behind the gods his helpers, the king at the head of his troops began the battle:

¹¹⁹ A *Book of the Wars of Yahweh* is cited as a source at Num. 21. 14.

¹²⁰ Ps. 44. 3(2) f., 10(9). Cf. Exod. 15. 3–12 (Song of the Sea), Jdg. 5. 4–5 (Song of Deborah).

etc.

¹²¹ Cf. Robertson Smith, 36 f.; Labat, 259–64; T. W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation*, Baltimore 1977, 30–73; V. Hurowitz and J. G. Westenholz, *JCS* 42, 1990, 31–5.

he shot an arrow, the weapon of Aškur ... he struck a man down dead.¹²³

Before him (the king), Enlil was lending him into battle;
Ishtar, mistress of the mêlée, was rousing him to strife;
Ninurta, first among the gods, was seizing (all) in front of him,
at his right Nusku was slaying all the foes,
on his left Adad was crushing the enemy.
Attached behind them he was discharging a rain of missiles.¹²⁴

We can hardly decline to see in all this a significant parallel to the Olympians' participation in human battles in Greek poetry. Ares and Enyo lead the Trojan lines forward,

and Ares wielded a huge spear in his hands,
moving now in front of Hector, now behind him.

Poseidon similarly leads the Achaeans, brandishing a mighty sword which is like a lightning-flash. When the Trojans charge at the Achaean wall, Apollo goes in front, kicking the rampart down.¹²⁴ In other passages the gods are described as urging the armies on and giving them courage, or as striking fear into them, just as Ishtar in the passages quoted above arouses the king to strife or changes the enemy's spirit.¹²⁵

A deity may break not only a hero's spirit but his actual weapons. Theano, the Trojan priestess of Athena, prays to the goddess to break Diomedes' spear; Poseidon does break that of Adamas the son of Asios, and Zeus breaks Teucer's bowstring.¹²⁶ Again, we see the same motif in the lines quoted above from the thirteenth-century Tukulti-Ninurta epic, where Ninurta smashes the enemy's weapons. Closer to Homer's time, Esarhaddon reports that in a battle Ishtar 'stood at my side and smashed their bows'. Similarly in a letter to Assurbanipal from the god Aškur we read:

I stood at your side and [poured out the blood] of your enemies ... I [sm]ashed the [bo]ws of Elam, and strengthened your bow; I made your weapons greater [th]an (those of) all your enemies.

¹²² *Tuk.-Nin.* v (A rev.) 31-42 (Foster, 225).

¹²³ Tiglath-pileser I epic, *LKA* 63, rev. 6-11 (Hurowitz-Westenholz, op. cit., 4; Foster, 237).

¹²⁴ *Il.* 5. 592-5, 14. 384 f., 15. 355 ff., cf. 15. 260/307-11, 18. 516 f. The Spartan army was traditionally escorted to war by the Tyndaridai (*Hdt.* 5. 75. 2; W. K. Prichett, *The Greek State at War*, iii: *Religion*, Berkeley 1979, 14 f.), and Simonides duly relates how they—and Menelaus too—went with the army as it set out in 479 BC (eleg. 11. 30 f. W.²).

¹²⁵ *Il.* 2. 446-54, 4. 439, 508-16, 5. 461-70, 8. 335, 13. 43-65, 83-125, 14. 522, 15. 229 f., 694 f., 18. 218; cf. *Exod.* 23. 27 (Bogan, 384). Archilochus uses the motif in the context of contemporary battles, 94. 1-3, 98. 6 f.

¹²⁶ *Il.* 6. 306, 13. 562, 15. 463; cf. 16. 114-21.

Further examples of this idea can be cited from the Old Testament.¹²⁷

The Homeric gods occasionally make a more extraordinary kind of intervention by whisking an endangered hero away through the air to safety. I cannot produce any parallel for this from the surviving literature of the Near East. But it may be recalled that just such an episode is depicted on two Phoenician silver bowls of the late eighth or early seventh century, where the Sun-goddess rescues a king from mortal danger by scooping him up into the air. It was argued that the coherent sequence of scenes on the bowls was based on a Phoenician narrative poem.¹²⁸ That was not, admittedly, a tale of battle. But if a Phoenician artist or poet was familiar with the idea at all, it was clearly available for use, and likely to be used, in battle narrative.

Fighting in the mass

There was probably never anything in the oriental traditions resembling Homer's extensive battle scenes. Heroic glory on the battlefield was monopolized by the king, and other individuals were seldom named. The course of the fighting was described briefly and in general terms. Nevertheless, we can discern certain conventional motifs shared with Greek epic.

The alert reader may have noticed one in the passage quoted above from the Tukulti-Ninurta epic, which has already provided us with material for several observations. There is a transition from a more general level of description to a more particular, and it is signalled by an initial bow-shot from the king's hand which finds its mark and fells a man. In the *Iliad* we find several transitions of this sort, where the detailed fighting begins at once with a successful kill. For instance, when the armies first clash after the breakdown of the truce in the fourth book, we have several lines characterizing the scene as a whole, the din of shields, the shouting, the earth flowing with blood, and then the individuals come into focus with an initial spear-cast.

Antilochus was the first to take a Trojan warrior,
a good front-liner, Thalysius' son Echepolus:
he hit him on his horse-plume helmet's crown
and clove it to his forehead; the bronze spear
entered the bone, and darkness veiled his eyes.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Borger, 44. 74-6; *CPLM* no. 44 obv. 29, rev. 5-6; Ps. 46. 10(9) (Bogan, 389), 76. 4(3), Jer. 49. 35 (again the bow of Elam), Hos. 1. 5.

¹²⁸ *Il.* 3. 373 ff., 5. 445; above, pp. 100 f.

¹²⁹ *Il.* 4. 457-61; cf. 7. 8, 11. 92, 16. 284, al.

Occasionally the Homeric hero dispatches a whole number of opponents in a block. Ajax 'pierced twelve men at close quarters before the ships'; Patroclus swoops thrice on the Trojans with a terrible roar and 'thrice nine men he killed'. If we had more of the Akkadian royal epics, it is possible that we should come upon similar feats there. Certainly in *Erra and Ishum* the divine decree in favour of Babylon includes the clause

Let the weak (man of) Akkad fell the strong Sutean;
let one man lead away seven, like sheep.

Joshua assures his people that 'one man of you puts a thousand to flight, because it is Yahweh your god who fights for you', while among David's warrior heroes there was one Ish-Baal who 'wielded his spear against eight hundred and slew them all at once', and another, Abishai, who achieved a similar success against three hundred.¹³⁰

Not that fighting was an easy matter. Homer often speaks of the toll of it, the fatigue and the perspiration

With weariness and sweat continually
the knees and shins and feet of every man,
their arms and eyes were running as they fought.

And so too in Ninurta's combat with Anzu:

In the sweat of battle both of them were bathed.¹³¹

The strenuousness, hardship, and confusion of the battle are also enhanced by the motif that it is enveloped in dust or darkness so that no one can see what is happening around him. Homer refers to the dust raised by the galloping horses, to a cloud of dust carried forward with the advancing Trojans, to a clash of opponents that is like a dust-storm. In other passages he speaks of a god covering the conflict in the darkness of night or mist. Hesiod describes the winds raising a dust storm in the fight between the Titans and the Olympians. Similarly in Akkadian: when Ninurta goes to fight Anzu, his mother advises him to 'send out a cloudburst, let him not recognize your face ... let the sun not shine upon him, let bright day turn to darkness for him', and indeed, when the two come together, 'gloom prevailed, the face of the mountains was veiled; Shamash, the light of the gods, went into darkness'. As Gilgamesh struggles with Humbaba, 'the white cloud grew black; death rained over them like a cloudburst'. When Tukulti-Ninurta's forces hurl themselves

¹³⁰ *Il.* 15. 746, 16. 784 f.; *Erra* V 27 f.; Josh. 23. 10, 2 Sam. 23. 8, 18.

¹³¹ *Il.* 17. 385-7, cf. 2. 388, 13. 711, 16. 109, etc.; *Anzu* III 8.

upon the enemy, 'flashing(?) storms blew towards each other like fighting lions, the combined tempests' chaos swirled on the battle'. A century later, in a literary account on an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar (the invasion of Elam, we read:

Both kings met and made battle. Between them a conflagration blazed out, the face of the sun was darkened by their dust, tempests were swirling, the storm flaming. In the storm of their battle the warrior in his chariot could not see the other who was with him.¹³²

Berserks

In the thick of the fray certain warriors are represented as raging furiously, like madmen. This is not a routine description of ordinary combat, but reserved for exceptional and temporary performances. It is said of Diomedes during his *aristeia*, then of Hector as he carries all before him and drives the Achaeans back towards their ships, and finally of Achilles as he chases the Trojans back into Ilios. The key words are *μολύραι*, 'he is raging mad', and *λύσσα*, 'wolf-fury'. The most explicit passage reads:

And Hector, greatly exulting in his strength,
is raging beyond all bounds, relying on Zeus, with no respect
for man or god, and a powerful wolf-fury has entered into him.¹³³

In Homer it is just a very few of the greatest warrior heroes who on occasion are visited by this *λύσσα*. There is no special class of berserks who assume it as their *métier*, as in Celtic and Nordic legend. Yet it may be that a tradition of such berserks lies behind the Homeric descriptions. We find just such an invincible, supernatural frenzy attributed to a body of Assyrian warriors in the decisive battle against Kaštiliaš:

They were furious, raging, altered in form like Anzu:
they were rushing wildly to the mêlée without covering;
they had ripped off their breastplates, discarded their clothing.¹³⁴

The motifs that the frenzied warrior fights naked and that he assumes fantastic, distorted shapes are strikingly paralleled in the Celtic traditions about such heroes as CúChulainn; there are traces of the latter also in the Norse *berserkr*, who is characterized as *eigi einhamr*, 'not of a single

¹³² *Il.* 11. 151, 12. 253, 13. 334 ff.; 5. 506 f., 16. 567, 17. 368/644 ff., cf. 21. 6, Hes. *Th.* 706; *Anzu* II 12-16 (and OBV), 50 f., *Gilg.* V Uruk fr. obv. ii 6 f., *Tuk.-Nin.* v (A rev.) 50' f. (Foster, 226); L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum*, London 1912, 32 no. 90858 i 29-34 (Foster, 298).

¹³³ *Il.* 9. 238 f., cf. 5. 185, 6. 101, 8. 299, 355, 9. 305, 12. 40 v.l., 13. 53, 15. 605, 16. 245, 21. 5 ('the previous day, when Hector was raging'), 542.

¹³⁴ *Tuk.-Nin.* v A 45'-47' (Foster, 225).

form'. (The same expression is used of werewolves.) If there was once something of the kind in the Greek epic tradition, it is only to be expected that, like other fantastic and supernatural elements, it should have been refined away before Homer's time—or by Homer—leaving thoroughly realistic heroes whose 'raging fury', while terrible and irresistible, remains just within the bounds of human potentiality.

Single combat

A hostile encounter between two individuals may be the main subject of a poem (as in *Anzu*, or the *Shield of Heracles*), or a local incident within a full-scale battle. Homeric battle narrative contains many such individual encounters. This is not so in Akkadian epic, because the king is the only warrior allowed to emerge as an individual. However, from poems such as *Anzu*, and from the heroic saga of the Old Testament, we can find parallels for a number of the motifs that Homer employs in constructing his duels.

One situation in which a single combat may appear in the context of a battle between armies is that where a challenge is issued for a volunteer to take on the enemy's champion. Sometimes there is a prior agreement that this encounter will settle the outcome of the war. The duel between Paris and Menelaus in the third book of the *Iliad* is conducted on these terms. That between Hector and Ajax in the seventh book is not, for Homer could hardly use the motif a second time. In other respects, however, this latter duel is an excellent specimen of the genre. With it we may compare the story of David and Goliath, which resembles it not just in its general concept but in the nature and sequence of its constituent elements:

1 Sam. 17

Goliath issues challenge (4–10//23)	Hector issues challenge (67–91)
Dismayed reaction (11 // 24)	Dismayed reaction (92–3)
David will fight him (32)	Ajax will fight him (191–9)
David arms (38–40)	Ajax arms (206)
Speeches of the combatants (43–7)	Speeches of the combatants (225–43)
The fight begins (48)	The fight begins (244)
Goliath laid low with stone (49–50)	Hector laid low with stone (268–72)

Iliad 7

It is part of Homer's regular technique that attention is paid to a warrior's arming before an episode in which he plays a prominent role, and also that a pair of combatants exchange speeches before coming to blows. For the sequence arming—speeches—duel we can find further parallels

in the Akkadian accounts of gods' conflicts with monsters. The scheme is followed in both *Anzu* and *Enūma eliš*.¹³⁵

Sometimes one of the warriors is overcome at the sight of his opponent. When Paris sees Menelaus responding to his challenge, he is killed and retreats to the safety of the ranks. When Hector sees Ajax responding to his, his heart thumps with apprehension; and although he acquiesces it on that occasion, when he sees Achilles bearing down on him in the climactic episode of the epic his courage fails and he turns and flees. In *Enūma eliš*, as Marduk approaches Tiamat and peers into her interior to survey her consort Qingu's disposition,

as he gazed, his counsel was confused,
his mind was in pieces, his actions muddled.
The gods too, his helpers who went at his side,
beheld the warrior leader and their sight was blurred.¹³⁶

But often a hero is confident of his own superiority and contemptuous of the opposition. 'Who are you, my dear sir?' asks Odysseus scornfully of Glaucus, not having seen him before. 'Unfortunate are they whose sons come against my fury.' Achilles asks the same question of Asteropaios:

τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν, ὃ μιν ἔτλης ἀντίος ἐλθεῖν;

Who and whence of men are you, that ventures to come against me?

And *Anzu* roars at Ninurta in practically the same words:

mannā attā ša ana tāhāziya tallika?

Who are you, that comes to fight me (lit. to my battle)?¹³⁷

The hero's confidence of success against his adversary also finds expression in the boast that the latter's body will be eaten by the birds or beasts. For example, in a later encounter with Ajax, Hector tells him that if he dares to face his spear, it will chew up his skin, and his flesh will be no feast for the Trojan dogs and birds. This is a recurrent motif in Homer. So too Humbaba threatens Gilgamesh:

Let me b[ite through your] windpipe and neck, Gilgamesh,
let me have [your flesh ea]ten by the screaming b[irds] of the forest,
eagles and vultures.

¹³⁵ *Anzu* II 30–4, 38–49, 52 ff., *En. el.* IV 35–58, 72–86, 93 ff.

¹³⁶ *En. el.* IV 67–70; Fries, 389 f.

¹³⁷ *Il.* 6. 123, 21. 150; *Anzu* II 42.

Even so Goliath threatens David: 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the field.' According to many authorities, Yahweh himself is given to uttering such comminations.¹³⁸

But pride sometimes goes before a fall. Humbaba found himself overwhelmed by Gilgamesh's assault. Gasping for breath, he pleaded for mercy, offering Gilgamesh abundance of that commodity of which he was lord—fine timber—and appealing to Enkidu to persuade his friend. But Enkidu told Gilgamesh to ignore the plea and finish the creature off and that was what he did.¹³⁹ Here again we meet a motif that is paralleled in the Homeric repertory. In several passages Homer portrays the implacability of one of his heroes by putting in the victim's mouth a last plea for life, which the hero dismisses. He does not put Hector in the ignoble position of begging for life—he begs instead for his body to be traded in for burial—but in other respects the pattern is similar. And if Hector does not make his plea precisely 'gasping for breath', like Humbaba, he does make it with failing strength (*ὀλιγοδρανέων*) and with his neck half cut through.¹⁴⁰

The other element in the *Gilgamesh* passage, the intervention of the victor's friend to preclude mercy, is paralleled in an earlier episode of the *Iliad*. Adrestus falls into Menelaus' hands and supplicates to be taken alive; his father will certainly pay a good ransom. Menelaus is about to accept the proposal, when Agamemnon comes pounding up and, with an indignant speech, persuades him to kill the man without ado.¹⁴¹ We may also recall a famous moment in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*. Clytaemestra is in Orestes' power: she pleads for her life: he hesitates. Pylades, opening his mouth for the first and last time in the play, insists that there can be no mercy, and that decides the matter.¹⁴² Pylades was established in the earlier epic tradition as the friend who assisted Orestes to avenge his father. What was the nature of the assistance? We may suspect that it was, at least in part, what it is in Aeschylus. Clytaemestra's exposure of her breast in pleading with her son is an epic motif;¹⁴³ so is the plea for

¹³⁸ *Jl.* 13. 831, cf. 2. 393, 4. 237, 8. 379, 11. 453, 15. 351, 16. 836, 18. 271, 22. 42, 89, 335, 354, 23. 183; *Gilg.* V Uruk fr. obv. i 9 f.; 1 Sam. 17. 44, cf. 46, Deut. 28. 26, 1 Ki. 14. 11, 21. 24, 2 Ki. 9. 10, 36, Ps. 79. 2, Isa. 18. 6, Jer. 16. 4, 19. 7, Ezek. 39. 4; Bogan, 33–5; Krenkel, 16; Brown, 280–2. Cf. also Esarhaddon's Vassal Treaties, Parpola–Watanabe 46, 451, 49, 484.

¹³⁹ *Gilg.* V Uruk fr. obv. ii 15 ff./SBV iii–iv. In the Sumerian poem that underlies this part of the *Gilgamesh* epic, it is Gilgamesh who, after hearing Huwawa's appeal, turns to Enkidu and suggests releasing the captive, but Enkidu is implacable: *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (A) 158 ff. (D. O. Edzard, ZA 80, 1990, 189).

¹⁴⁰ *Jl.* 10. 378 ff., 20. 463 ff., 21. 34 ff., 22. 337 ff., *Od.* 22. 310 ff.

¹⁴¹ *Jl.* 6. 37 ff.

¹⁴² Aesch. *Cho.* 896 ff.

¹⁴³ Cf. Hecuba at *Jl.* 22. 80 ff., and perhaps Geryon's mother in Stesichorus, *SLG* 13 = *PMGF* p. 158.

life at the point of death; so is the intervention of the victor's friend to cut off my impulse to leniency. So the whole incident may have stood in the epic.

Slaughter of the innocents

The ferocity shown towards a defeated people, too, finds similar expression in east and west. In urging Menelaus not to spare Adrestus or any Trojan, Agamemnon says roundly 'Let none of them escape from death and from our hands, not even the male child that his mother still carries in her womb'. A savage sentiment; but he is only echoing the ideology of a Tiglath-pileser, who, as the poet of the 'Hunter and Asses' epyllion reports admiringly,

slit open pregnant women's wombs, pierced the babies;
he cut off the heads of their strong men.

No gentler was that sacker of Babylon who, according to a later epic, instructed the army commander

You will not fear god or respect man:
young and old alike you must put to death;
no infant who sucks milk will you spare.

Similarly Samuel, on Yahweh's authority, told Saul to go and smite the Amalekites: 'have no pity for them, but kill man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.' Elisha prophesied that Hazael, as king of Syria, would ravage Israel, 'smash their infants in pieces, and split open their pregnant women'.¹⁴⁴

SIMILES

A characteristic feature of Homeric poetry is its use of similes to make the action more vivid.¹⁴⁵ There are essentially two types of simile, the short and the long. In the short simile the subject or object of a verb is simply likened to something else that can be pictured in the same relation to the same verb, as in 'he leapt on him like a lion', or 'they honour him like a god'. The simile is contained in a single phrase in the same verse as the verb. The long simile, on the other hand, is developed over several

¹⁴⁴ *Jl.* 6. 57–9, cf. 22. 63 f., 24. 735; *LKA* 62 rev. 3 f., *Erra* IV 27–9; 1 Sam. 15. 3, 2 Ki. 8. 12, cf. 15. 16, Isa. 13. 18, Amos 1. 13; G. O. Hutchinson on Aesch. *Sept.* 348–50.

¹⁴⁵ There is an extensive literature on the subject; see e.g. H. Fränkel, *Die homerischen Gleichnisse*, Göttingen 1921; W. C. Scott, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile*, Leiden 1974; C. Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems (Hypomnemata, 49)*, Göttingen 1977.

lines, sketching a whole situation which is more or less parallel to that in the narrative; it often contains several clauses, in which further details are successively added to the picture. Such a simile may begin in the same form as a short simile, which is then extended by means of a relative clause:

He came forward like a mountain lion, confident in his strength,
who advances through rain and wind, his eyes
blazing, and he goes among cattle or sheep
or after wild deer, and his belly impels him
even to enter a closed stading in quest of the flocks:
so it was that Odysseus . . .

Alternatively the simile starts a new sentence and is introduced by 'And as when ...', with the main clause following after an 'even so ...'.

The simile had long been established as a poetic resource in the Near East. Many examples can be found in Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Hittite poetry, as well as in literary prose. In the next chapter we shall see that many of Homer's similes were actually at home in Near Eastern tradition. For the moment we shall look only at form, not at content.

In the eastern poetries it is the short simile that predominates. It is usually introduced by a comparative particle, Akkadian *kī* or *kīnu*, Ugaritic *k-*, etc., 'like', so that from a syntactical point of view it is entirely analogous to the Homeric construction with ὥστε, ἥύτε, or (postpositive) ὡς: Akkadian *utta* 'ar *kī labbi*, 'he was roaring like a lion', may be put beside Homer's στενάχων ὥστε λῆς ἡὺγένηςιος, 'groaning like a bearded lion'.¹⁴³

The long type of simile, while comparatively rare in the eastern traditions, is not unknown. Examples occur already in Sumerian.¹⁴⁴ From seventh-century Akkadian literary prose a passage from the *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince* may be quoted:

Like a young man, a shedder of blood, who wanders about by himself in a reed thicket, (and) a runner has caught up with him, and his heart is pounding, or like a lusty young boar who has mounted his mate (and) his insides keep inflating (and) he keeps emitting wind from his mouth and behind him, (so) his liver gave vent to lamentation and he said 'Woe, my heart!'¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ *Anzu* II 38, II. 18. 318. Akkadian also has a case-ending *-i3* which from the late second millennium came to be used in a comparative sense in literary language.

¹⁴⁴ *Šulgi B* 339–46 (G. R. Castellino, *Two Šulgi Hymns*, Rome 1972, 64 f.), *Enki and the World Order* 255–7 (Bottéro-Kramer, 174), al.; cf. Stella (1978), 374–8, who cites also Egyptian examples from the New Kingdom.

¹⁴⁵ *CPLM* no. 32 rev. 29–31 (Foster, 736).

Two examples from eighth-century Hebrew poetry have a more Homeric allusion

And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations,
amid many peoples,
like a lion among the beasts of the forest,
like a lionet among the flocks of sheep,
which, once it gets in, tramples
and rends, and there is no rescuer.

As the lion or the lionet growls over his prey,
against whom a complement of shepherds is called out
at their voices he is not terrified,
and does not cower from their uproar;
so the Lord of Hosts will come down ...¹⁴⁹

At the same time they provide a neat pair of parallels for the two Homeric structures, the one with the main clause followed by 'like a —, which — and —', the other with the simile first, 'As when —, and —, so ...'. The latter arrangement is also exemplified by the Assyrian excerpt above. Both types go back to Sumerian verse.

We may admire the beauty and aptness of Homer's similes, but at the same time we must recognize not only that some of them were traditional in content, but also that he was using a device which had been established in all its formal aspects long before his time, in the Near East. We have seen in the course of this chapter that the same is true of many other features of Homer's art. His mechanisms for launching a story and carrying it forward, his deployment of messengers, his use and portrayal of dreams, his ways of exploiting speech as a structural element, his accounts of feasting and other genre scenes, numerous typical motifs of his battle narratives, his whole treatment of the gods—all of these show, in outline and in detail, so many similarities with Near Eastern poetry that we are bound to infer an intimate historical connection. At some period (or periods) in the course of its pre-Homeric development, the tradition of Greek epic had flowed along with a wider East Mediterranean tradition, and had been influenced by it, not casually or just at occasional points, but profoundly and pervasively.

¹⁴⁹ Mic. 5. 7(8), Isa. 31. 4 (compared with II. S. 136–43 by Fries, 391; cf. also II. 18. 161 f.); cf. also Nah. 3. 17.

5

A Form of Words

Here and there in the last chapter we encountered cases where Greek and Near Eastern poets not only do things in the same way but, in doing them, use very similar verbal formulations. Now we will look more generally at parallelisms of idiom and expression between the different traditions. We shall find that Homeric and other Greek poetic diction is characterized by many turns of phrase that do not correspond to normal Greek idiom as we know it from Classical prose, but do correspond to oriental idiom. It will emerge that 'Semiticisms' are not something that first appear in Greek in the Septuagint: there are Semiticisms in Homer. In addition to idioms we shall be considering noun-epithet formulae, similes and metaphors, figures of speech, a series of distinctively poetic interjections, and the language of hymns and prayers.

PHRASES AND IDIOMS

Formulaic epithets

As was briefly mentioned near the beginning of the previous chapter, the use of ornamental epithets is a feature of the Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Hurro-Hittite poetic traditions—not to the same extent as in Greek hexameter verse, but to similar effect. Some examples were cited by way of illustration, but no detailed comparisons made. There are in fact several noun-epithet formulae that parallel formulae familiar from Homer. It may be conceded in advance that they are not of a very distinctive character and might well have come into being independently in any tradition which embraced the noun-epithet formula in principle. More compelling comparisons will follow later, but these make the most natural starting-point.

The earth in Homer is commonly 'the dark earth', γαῖα μέλαινα, or 'the broad earth', εὐρέα χθών. 'The dark earth', Hittite *dankui degan* or *deganzipa*, is a frequent formula in the Hurro-Hittite literary tradition.¹

¹ It is used especially of the underworld, but sometimes also of the earth's surface. See N. Oettinger, *Die Welt des Orients* 20/1, 1989/90, 83–98, who argues persuasively that the phrase is of Hurrian origin and that the Greeks borrowed it from Anatolia, probably in connection with the myth of the Former Gods who were consigned to the underworld.

In Akkadian poetry, on the other hand, we read repeatedly of 'the broad earth', *eršetü šuddultu* or *rapāštu*.²

The adjective 'broad' is employed in several other parallel Greek and Akkadian formulae:

Broad sea: εὐρέα πόντον, εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης; *tāmtu rapāštu* (frequent in verse).³

Broad heaven: οὐρανὸς εὐρύς; *šamē rapšūti* (literary prose).⁴

Broad army: στρατὸς εὐρύς, στρατὸν εὐρέα λαών; *rapšu* regularly of an extensive army (*ummiānātu*) or people (*nišu*).⁵

Broad shoulders: εὐρέες ὦμοι; *Atr.* II iv 17 *rapšātum būdāšina* [*inlqā*], 'their broad shoulders [grew thin]'.

Of the epithets applied to gods and heroes in Akkadian and Ugaritic epic, none seems to offer a significant parallel with Greek. Those applied to cities are perhaps a little more interesting. In the Old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh epic, Uruk is regularly called *Uruk ubittim*, 'Uruk of the (broad) plaza'.⁶ Several scholars have been reminded of the Homeric εὐρυάγυια, 'broad-wayed', applied to Troy, Mycene, Athens, and cities unspecified. In Ugaritic poetry several cities are designated by the binary formula 'C the great ... C the well-watered';⁷ in Homer we have Ida of the many springs (πολυπίδακος Ἰδης), and the epitaph on the Corinthians who fell at Salamis refers to 'the well-watered city of Corinth'.⁸

Gods and men

That both in east and west reference should sometimes be made to 'all the gods' is in itself of no significance. But some of the particular phrases used to express this concept merit attention. Homer several times employs the formula ὅσοι θεοὶ εἰσ' ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ, 'as many gods

² The first in *Anzu* I 52, *Hymn to Shamash* 28 (BWL 126), the second in *Anzu* II 46, *Gilg.* VIII *msiv* 43, 47, *En. el.* VII 69, *Hymn to Shamash* 169, 177, 179 (BWL 136). Cf. Burkert (1992), 116, 211 n. 10. However, 'broad earth' may well have been a traditional Graeco-Aryan phrase, in Sanskrit the earth is *Pṛthivī*, the Broad One.

³ *Atr.* x rev. ii 7, 29, *Eṭana* III 33, 37, 41, *Adapa* A 22, *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (Amarna) 83, *En. el.* VII 74, *Hymn to Shamash* 35, *Erra* I 152, 161, IV 49, *CPLM* no. 2 obv. 20; Hecker, 167.

⁴ *AHW* s.v. *rapšu(m)* I 2a.

⁵ *Ibid.* 4ab.

⁶ In the SBV the phrase is systematically replaced by *Uruk supūri*, 'Uruk sheepfold'. In the prologue to Hammurabi's Laws (iv 50) we find *Akade rebitim*, 'Akkad of the plaza'.

⁷ *KTU* 1. 14 iii 4 f., al. (Udm), 15 iv 19 f. (Hbr), 100. 63 f. (Aršh). The interpretation of *ṣrr* as 'well-watered' is based on Arabic *ṣarr* 'abundant in water'. The alternative view that it means 'small' is nonsensical when it is in parallel with *rb* 'great'. Cf. Caquot-Sznycer, 519 note j.

⁸ *CEG* 131. 1 εὐρύδορον ... ἄστρ φορίνοθ.

as there are in Olympus'. We find a very similar expression in Akkadian poetry: *Anunnaki* or *ilānu mala bašū*, 'as many Anunnaki/gods as there are'.⁹ Again, Homer's formula πάντες τε θεοὶ πάσαι τε θεάιναι, 'all the gods and all the goddesses', is closely matched in Assurbanipal's acrostic hymn to Marduk and Zarpanitu: *kal ilāni, gimir ištarāti*, 'all of the gods, all of the goddesses'.¹⁰

The Greek poets often say that something came about 'through the will/counsel of Zeus' or of another god, Διὸς βουλήσι, Διὸς μεγάλῃ, διὰ βουλᾶς, βουλήι 'Αθηναίης, etc. The word βουλή does not just mean 'will' in the sense of what the god wanted; it implies a considered plan. A parallel expression can be cited from the Old Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh epic, where it is said of Gilgamesh's execution of the *droit de seigneur*, 'it was decreed by the counsel of Anu (*ina milku ša Anim*), and appointed for him at the cutting of his umbilical cord'. The noun *milku* corresponds exactly to βουλή. We may also refer back to the passage quoted earlier (p. 132) from the Tukulti-Ninurta epic:

By the disposition (*šimtu*) of Nudimmud his measure is counted with the gods' flesh,

by the decision (*purussū*) of the Lord of the Lands he was successfully cast in the channel of the gods' womb.¹¹

When the final outcome is yet unknown, Homer's characters will say that it 'lies on the knees of the gods' (or in the lap of the gods, as the derivative English idiom has it):

ὅλλ' ἤτοι μὲν ταῦτα θεῶν ἐν γούνασι κεῖται.

There is, however, nothing in Greek myth or art to explain the phrase 'In the gods' hands' would be easier to understand; why 'on their knees'? Babylonian poetry, while it does not possess a matching expression, nevertheless offers an attractive answer. There the future is determined by the so-called Tablet of Destinies, the *tupšimātu*. Whoever possesses it controls the world. Its place is on its owner's knees, as we see from *Anzu*. After Ninurta has regained it from the usurper Anzu, Dagan is advised:

'Send for him and let him come to you;
let him set the Tablet of Destinies on your knees.'¹²

⁹ Il. 1. 566, al.; *En. el.* V 86, 106; similarly *Od.* 8. 222 = *Ludlul* IV 42, 'as many mortals as there are'.

¹⁰ Il. 8. 5, al.; *CPLM* 2 obv. 36. *kal* and *gimir* are synonyms for 'totality'.

¹¹ *Gilg.* OBV Pennsylvania fr. iv 26 f.; *Tuk.-Nin.* i A 16 f.

¹² *Anzu* III 38 f.

may plausibly be identified as the mythological concept that underlies the Homeric phrase.

A striking Semiticism that has hitherto excited little comment¹³ appears in the vulgate text of *Iliad* 1. 97:

οὐδ' ὃ γε πρὶν λοιμοῖο βαρείας χεῖρας ἀφέξει ...

Nor will (Apollo) sooner withdraw the heavy hands of plague, than ...

This was already read by Zenodotus, and it is what our manuscripts give; *Valerianus*, however, preferred the more banal variant

οὐδ' ὃ γε πρὶν Δαναοῖσιν ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἀπώσσει.

Nor will he sooner drive the ugly perdition away from the Danaans.

The 'heavy hands' of the vulgate text reflect the Semitic idiom by which a pestilence (or other affliction) is described as the hand of a god, which lies upon the sufferer or sufferers and may be perceived as 'heavy'. This expression 'the hand of the god' or 'of the gods' was already commonplace in Akkadian of the Old Babylonian period.¹⁴ In the fourteenth century the king of Cyprus writing to the Pharaoh reports that 'in my land the hand of ⁴MAŠ.MAŠ (= Resheph?) my lord has killed the whole population', and again that 'the hand of ⁴MAŠ.MAŠ is on my land and my house'. Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan, the righteous sufferer of *Ludlul*, complains that 'His hand was heavy (upon me), I could not raise it'. In *Atrahasis*, when mankind is afflicted by a plague, Enki advises Atrahasis that offerings must be made to Namtara: 'Let him be shamed by the presents, let him suspend(?) his hand.'¹⁵ This is the equivalent of Apollo's removing his heavy hands in the *Iliad* passage. The Old Testament provides an even closer parallel for the expression:

And the hand of Yahweh was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified them and afflicted them with piles ... (The Philistines consult their priests and diviners, who recommend returning the Israelites' captured ark together with five gold models of mice and five gold models of their haemorrhoids.) So you must make images of your piles, and images of your mice that ravage the land,

¹³ Noted, however, by Bogan, 1-3; G. Capovilla, *Aegyptus* 1/2, 1960, 26.

¹⁴ *CT* 5. 4. 1, *YOS* 10. 58. 1; in the Mari letters, *AEM* 1/1. 223, 562, 565, 566 (cp. 84. 10, 260, 5, 9, 264. 5, 265. 30), cf. 299 (136. 8).

¹⁵ *EA* no. 35. 13 f., 37; *Ludlul* III 1, cf. the prayer to Ea, Shamash, and Marduk in W. G. Lambert, *JNES* 33, 1974, 274. 33, 'your hand is strong, I have experienced your punishment'; *Atr.* I 384 = 399, cf. 411, II 78, 91, and for the translation 'suspend', Lambert-Millard, 155 f.

and give glory to the god of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand from upon you and from upon your gods and from upon your land.¹⁶

Sometimes people judge that a god must be involved in what has happened or what is happening currently. In Greek this is regularly expressed by means of a double negative. 'It is not without a god that he is raging like this', says Pandarus of Diomedes; 'it is not without a god (οὐκ ἄθεός) that this man has come to the house of Odysseus', says Eurymachus in mockery of the beggar; 'it is not but by the gods' will that Odysseus had done these deeds', opines Medon of the killing of the suitors.¹⁷ We may compare the message sent by Sennacherib to Hezekiah the king of Judah, demanding his capitulation. Confident in his divine backing, he asks, 'Is it without Yahweh that I have come up against this place to bring ruin upon it?'¹⁸ The rhetorical question is equivalent to 'it is not without Yahweh'. The context is different from the Greek examples, but the form of expression is analogous.

The god who assists a man and protects him in the face of danger is often described as 'standing beside' him. I am not thinking so much of the many occasions in Homer where a god or goddess is represented as literally active at a hero's side, as of passages where 'stand beside' (παρίστασθαι) is used in a more general, almost metaphorical sense. For example, Odysseus prays to Athena:

Hear me, child of Zeus the goat-rider, you who ever
stand beside me in all my toils.¹⁹

We find Aramaic parallels for the expression in the eighth-century royal inscriptions from Zincirli. Panammu claims:

In my youth there stood with me (*qmw* 'my') the gods Hadad and El and Reshep and Rakkibel and Shemesh; and Hadad and El and Rakkibel and Shemesh and Reshep gave into my hands the sceptre of authority; and Reshep stood with me.

His great-grandson Barrakkib, on his monument erected in honour of his father, Panammu II, states

There was a curse on his father's house; but the god Hadad stood with him (*qm* ... [*ḫmh*].²⁰

¹⁶ 1 Sam. 5. 6, cf. 7, 9, 11; 6. 5. Cf. also Exod. 9. 3, Ps. 38. 3(2). The Ugaritic verse which Gordon translated as 'verily to stay the hand of the disease' (*KTU* 1. 16 v 27, cited by Dittmeier, 25, and previously in *Gnomon* 26, 1954, 155) is now read differently.

¹⁷ *Il.* 5. 185, *Od.* 18. 353, 24. 444; cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 2. 7, 5. 76, *Aesch. Pers.* 164, *Eur. Bacch.* 764, *I.A.* 809; further material in W. Buhler's commentary on Moschus, *Europa* 152.

¹⁸ 2 Ki. 18. 25 (Bogan, 76).

¹⁹ *Il.* 10. 278 f.; cf. 5. 809, 10. 290 f., 15. 255, 21. 231, 23. 782 f., *Od.* 3. 218-24, 4. 827, 13. 301, 387-91.

In this expression the god may seem to have the role of an attendant, but of course there is no question of his being subordinate to the king. On the contrary, a king, or anyone, may be designated as the servant of a god. Peltas and Neleus became κρατερῶ θεράποντε Διὸς μεγάλοιο, 'powerful servants of great Zeus', that is, strong kings. Homeric actions are often called 'servants of Ares', a poet is a 'servant of the Muses', a carpenter is a 'slave (δμωός) of Athena'.²¹ In these phrases, which are purely poetic and have no counterpart in prose, a member of a class is treated as the servant of the particular deity who is the patron of that class. A more personal relationship is implied by the many Semitic names formed with 'servant' (Akk. *wardum*, West Semitic 'abd) followed by the name of a deity, 'Servant of Sin', 'Servant of Anat', 'Servant of El', 'Servant of Eshmun', etc. According to Robertson Smith, such names

seem to have been originally most common in royal and priestly families, whose members naturally claimed a special interest in religion and a constant nearness to the god; and in later times, when a man's particular worship was not rigidly defined by his national connection, they served to specify the cult to which he was particularly attached, or the patron to whom his parents dedicated him.²²

When prayers are answered, this is sometimes expressed by saying that the deity 'heard the voice' of the suppliant. Odysseus relates that he petitioned Circe, clasping her about the knees, θεὰ δέ μοι ἔκλυεν αὐδῆς, 'and the goddess heard my voice'. Sappho uses the same phrase. It is common in West Semitic inscriptions, as well as in the Old Testament.

Rightly which Bar-Hadad ... set up for his lord Melgart, to whom he made a vow and he hearkened to his voice (*šm* ' *lqlh*).

And I called upon my lady Baalat of Byblos, and she heard my voice (*šm* ' [*h*] *qf*).²³

Hesiod curiously refers to the Nereids, the daughters of Nereus and Doris, as 'children of goddesses', and he uses the same phrase of the Oceanids, daughters of Oceanus and Tethys.²⁴ They are themselves

²⁰ *KAI* 214 = *SSI* ii. 64 no. 13. 1-3; 215 = *SSI* ii. 78 no. 14. 2.

²¹ *Od.* 11. 255, *Il.* 2. 110, etc., Archil. 1; Hes. *Th.* 100, Thgn. 769, al.; Hes. *Op.* 430; more in my note on Hes. *Th.* 100 (West [1966], 188).

²² Robertson Smith, 69. For names of this type at Ugarit see F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*, Rome 1967, 31-4, 80-5, 104-6; for those in Phoenician documents, Z. S. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language*, New Haven 1936, 128-30.

²³ *Od.* 10. 481, Sappho 1. 6; *KAI* 201 = *SSI* ii. 3 no. 1 (Damascus, c. 860); 10 = *SSI* iii. 94 no. 25. 2 f. (Byblos, later 5th c.); cf. *KAI* 61A-B = *SSI* iii. 74-6 nos. 21. 5 f., 22. 5 f. (Malta, c. 700), *SSI* iii. 65 no. 16. 5 (Seville, early 8th c.); Gen. 30. 6, Num. 20. 16, al.

²⁴ Hes. *Th.* 240 μεγάρτα τέκνα θεάων, 366 θεάων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα.

divine, and he seems to be using the phrase 'children of goddesses' to mean 'members of the general class "goddess", whose individual identities are not important'. If so, this corresponds closely to the Semitic idiom that we have already met in previous chapters, by which a collectivity of unspecified deities is referred to as 'sons of gods', Ugaritic *bn ilm*, Old Phoenician *bn 'lm*, Hebrew *b'ne hā'elōhīm*, etc.²⁵

The Homeric formula *υἱες Ἀχαιῶν*, 'the sons of the Achaeans', is a phrase of the same type, since it cannot be distinguished in meaning from 'the Achaeans'. So in Hebrew we find *b'ne kuššiyīm*, *b'ne hall'wiyyīm*, 'sons of the Cushites' = the Ethiopians, 'sons of the Levites' = the Levites.²⁶ After Homer we find similar expressions in tragedy and in speeches in Herodotus. It must be stressed that these are not vernacular in character but a literary mannerism. This is even more the case with phrases such as *ζωγράφων παῖδες* 'sons of painters' or *γραμματικῶν παῖδες* 'sons of grammarians', affected by writers of later prose; here too we can see the models in Semitic usage, where members of professions are called 'sons of seers', 'sons of craftsmen', and so on.²⁷

It is perhaps less remarkable that a man's descendants should sometimes be referred to as 'his sons, and his sons' sons', though it is not the idiom of English or of any other modern language known to me. To our ears it has a biblical ring, and indeed it occurs repeatedly in the Old Testament, as well as in Akkadian. In Greek we encounter the full form of the phrase in Tyrtaeus:

his tomb and his sons are pointed out among men,
and his sons' sons, and his issue thereafter.

Homer and Pindar, like Jeremiah, have the more compact form 'his sons' sons',²⁸

Another Homeric formula which stands out as distinctive, and does not seem to be the expression of an abiding Greek conception, is the one that characterizes a king as 'shepherd of peoples', *ποιμένα λαῶν*. This is

perhaps a natural metaphor in an early pastoral society, and sporadic parallels in Vedic, Old English, and Irish raise the possibility of an Indo-European legacy. But as Marcello Durante has noted, 'the image of the shepherd of peoples is not found only in related languages [to Greek] ... but resounds through a vast oriental area; until we have identified the starting-points, the channels, the chronology of this cultural continuum, nothing can be said about the provenance of the Greek metaphor.'²⁹ The fact is that it is most anciently and most pervasively attested in Mesopotamia, and known also in Israel. The kings of Sumer and Akkad in the third millennium already gave themselves the title of Shepherd of peoples, whose deeds are pleasing to Ishtar'. In the closing hymn to Ninurta in *Anzu* the god is said to have had assigned to him 'the whole shepherdship of peoples', and the expression 'shepherd of the many peoples' is still current in the time of Assurbanipal. Many other Akkadian texts refer to the king as a shepherd. According to a bilingual proverb, 'a people without a king—sheep without a shepherd'. Similarly Moses asks Yahweh to appoint a ruler over the people so that they may not be 'like sheep which have no shepherd'. Later the tribes of Israel tell David, 'the Lord said to you, "You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall be chief over Israel"'.³⁰

Battle narrative

Several phrases and expressions to do with battle run parallel in Greek and Mesopotamian poetry. The process of joining battle may be called 'mixing' battle; Callinus has τὸ πρῶτον μειγνυμένου πολέμου, and other poets have the verb with Ἄρη or βίαν as the object. The rebellious gods in *Atrahasis* cry *i niblula qablam*, 'let us mix the battle!'³¹ By a different metaphor, battle is said to be 'tied' or 'fastened together'. The Greek verb is συνάπτειν, found in this connection in prose (Herodotus) as well as in verse. In Akkadian it is *šatū*, 'plait' or 'weave'.³²

²⁵ Cf p 97. In [Hes.] fr. 204. 101 it is not clear whether τέκνα θεῶν means 'gods' or refers to the 'half-god' heroes mentioned in the previous line. For occasional parallels in later poetry see my note on Hes. *Th* 240.

²⁶ Amos 9. 7, 1 Chr. 15. 15, al. Cf. Bogan, 5; Burkert (1992), 46, 180 n. 40.

²⁷ Aesch. *Pers.* 402 παῖδες Ἑλλήνων, Eur. *Supp.* 1213 παῖσι δ' Ἀργείων, Hdt. 1. 27. 3, 2. 21. 3, 5. 49. 2, epigr. in 5. 77. 4 = CEG 179. 2; Pl. *Leg.* 769b, Ath. 49b, etc.; Akk. *mārū bārīn*, *ummiānūn* etc. (with the genitive noun singular or plural); Heb. *b'ne hann'bi'im*, *hakkōhānīm*, *hakkōh'ārīm*, 'sons of the prophets, priests, gatekeepers'.

²⁸ Gen. 45. 10, 46. 7, Deut. 4. 9, 6. 2, 2 Ki. 17. 41 (Bogan, 198); royal dispensations at Ugarit, *PRU* iii. 43. 32, 52. 22, al.; hymn of Assurbanipal to Ašur, *CPLM* no. 1 rev. 9'; Nabonidus 4. 31 (Langdon, 68); Tyrt. 12. 30. 'Sons' sons' without 'sons': *H.* 20. 308 (cf. *Hymn. Aphr.* 197), Pind. *Nem.* 7. 100, Jer. 2. 9; so too *PRU* iii. 63. 9, 90. 12, al.

²⁹ M. Durante, *Sulla preistoria della tradizione poetica greca* ii, Rome 1976, 111; cf. R. Kühnert, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden 1967, 283 f.; M. L. West, *JHS* 108, 1988, 154 n. 26.

³⁰ In the *Desert by the Early Grass* 290' ff., *The Cursing of Akkade* 40 (Jacobsen, 78, 362), *Umulgi* A 5, C 19, 103, 140, D 2, 12, 40, 60, X 9, etc.; Hammurabi iv 45, *Anzu* III 129, *CPLM* no. 32 obv. 27; *Eana* I 6, 20, *Gilg.* I ii 15, 24, *Tuk.-Nin.* ii D 7 'the king, the wise shepherd', *CPLM* no. 4 rev. 19' (Sargon) 'the shepherd of Assyria', 44 obv. 12; *BWL* 229. 14, Num. 27. 17, 2 Sam. 5. 2; *Udd.* 38 f.; Schott, 70-2.

³¹ Callin. I. 11, Alc. 330, Soph. *O.C.* 1046, Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 213, cf. *Il.* 15. 510, 20. 374; *Atr.* I 62.

³² *Gilg.* (OBV) Yale fr. iv 14 'Gilgamesh, they will say, plaited battle with fierce Huwawa'; *AltW* 1203 *šatū* III G 3b, *CAD* *šatū* B 1c.

When a warrior takes heart for the fight, Homer uses the phrase μνήσασθαι (θυρίδος) ἀλκῆς, literally 'remember/bethink oneself of valour'. An exactly similar expression occurs in the *Agušaya* hymn:

šī ihsus qurdam,
il-libbiša iktāšsar ananta.

She bethought herself of valour,
in her heart she prepared the battle.³³

A fallen warrior in Homer is enveloped by 'the dark cloud of death', θανάτου μέλαν νέφος. A similar phrase occurs in Akkadian, albeit not in exactly the same context. When Ninurta and Anzu meet in battle, we read that 'clouds of death were raining down'. According to a late text of the *Gilgamesh* epic, as the hero fought with Humbaba, 'death was raining on them like an *imbāru*'; the word seems to mean a rainstorm so dense as to obscure the view.³⁴

In several Greek formulae relating to the killing of warriors the dust plays a role. Among other phrases, the victor is said to 'cast them down in the dust', ἐν κονίησι βάλειν, and there they get a mouthful of it, they bite the dust, as we say: ὁδᾶξ ἔλον ἄσπετον οὐδᾶς. Similar expressions are found in the Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh and Agga*:

But he ...
was not able to tumble the myriads in the dust,
was not able to overwhelm all the highlanders,
was not able to fill with dust the mouths of the lowlanders.³⁵

One of the most memorable Homeric images for the slaughter of battle is that of mowing or reaping.

And as lines of reapers opposite each other
press forward up the furrow of a rich man's field
of wheat or barley, and the sheaves fall thick and fast,
so Trojans and Achaeans, leaping at each other,
slashed away.

In another passage it appears that it is Zeus who regulates the yield of this bloody harvest:

For men soon have their fill of battle's moil,
where the bronze blade casts straw abundant on the earth,

³³ *Agušaya* A iv 10 f.

³⁴ Il. 16. 350, Od. 4. 180, cf. Il. 20. 417 f.; Anzu II 55 *erpēt mūt izammunū*, *Gilg.* V Uruk fr. obv.

³⁵ Il. 5. 588, 8. 156, 19. 61, etc.; *Gilgamesh and Agga* 76-9, cf. 95-7 (Jacobsen, 352, 354).

but the harvest's slight, when Zeus tips back the balance.³⁶

The image occurs a thousand years earlier in Mesopotamia. In the Sumerian poem *Lugal-e* the god Ninurta is described striding into battle and 'reaping like grain the necks of the insubordinate'. In an Old Babylonian hymn the god Papulegarra, worshipped at Kesh, is hymned as *šyd tuqumtim*, 'harvester in battle'.³⁷ In a Hebrew prophet we read:

March thy warriors down, Yahweh ...
Ply (pl.) the sickle, for the harvest is ripened.³⁸

Speech

In the last chapter we considered a number of speech-introducing and speech-closing formulae in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Hittite that resembled those of Homeric epic. Here we may turn our attention to some other phraseological parallels relating in one way or another to speech.

Several times in the *Odyssey* a speech begins with the exhortation

κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μεο, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅτι κεν εἴπω.

Listen now, Ithacesians, to what I am going to say.

Similarly in the *Song of Ullikummi* we find Kumarbi saying to his vizier,

Mukisanu, my vizier, (for) the speech that I speak to you,
hold out (your) ear to me.

In two other places the poet uses a variation of the same formula. Lemekh's poetic address to his wives begins:

'Adah and Šillah, hear my voice;
wives of Lemek, give ear to my word.³⁹

Homer describes Nestor's persuasive voice as 'flowing off his tongue sweeter than honey'. The expression has parallels in Hebrew poetry.

³⁶ Il. 11. 67-71, 19. 221-4.

³⁷ *Lugal-e* 6 (Jacobsen, 235; Bottéro-Kramer, 340), cf. lexical texts quoted in CAD E 338; *RAA* Centenary Supplement, 1924, 71 (Seux, 48; Foster, 72. 37). A passage in the *Agušaya* hymn, A iii 7. 10, is rendered by Foster (80) as follows: 'Her feast is the melec, the dancing about of (grim) reaping. ... the harvest song(?), She garners(?) the valorous.' The lines are difficult, however, and it is not clear to me that the harvesting metaphor is present.

³⁸ Joel 4(3). 11-13.

³⁹ Od. 2. 25, al.; *Ullikummi* I C ii 32 f., A iii 38 f., III A ii 18 f. (Hoffner, 53 § 9, 54 § 14, 58 § 40); Gen. 4. 23, cf. Deut. 32. 1; S. A. Moller, *Speaking of Speaking. Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*, 46), 1992, 112-18.

How your words glide over my palate,
more than honey in my mouth!

For the lips of an alien woman drip honey,
and her voice (lit. palate) is smoother than oil.⁴⁰

Kabti-ilani-Marduk uses the formula 'what X said was sweet to him like finest oil'. In Hebrew 'smooth', *hālāq*, and its cognate verb and nouns are often used of flattering, seductive, deceptive speech; we also meet the phrases 'a smooth mouth', 'smoothness of tongue', 'make one's tongue/words smooth'. In the same way Solon speaks of 'wheeling smoothly' (λείως), and Io's persuasive dreams address her with 'smooth words' (λείοισι μύθοις).⁴¹

Another Hebrew adjective that can be used in a similar sense is *raḥ*, 'soft'.

Smoother than yoghurt was his speech ...
softer his words than oil.

A soft answer turns back anger.

This corresponds closely to the Greek poets' 'soft words', μαλακοὶς ἐπέεσσι or λόγοισι.⁴²

A further metaphor applied to words in both Greek and Semitic poetry is 'crooked, twisted'. μῦθοι and λόγοι can be σκολιοί, as alku can judicial decisions and pronouncements. According to a Babylonian poet, the gods who created mankind endowed them with 'twisted speech (*itguru dabābu*), lies and not truth', and the same expression is used when Marduk is celebrated as 'the one who makes justice straight, who tears out crooked speech'. Similarly the Book of Proverbs condemns 'twistedness of mouth' ('*iqq-šōt peh*) and the man who is 'twisted in his lips' ('*iqq-šōt pātāy*).⁴³

Another Hebrew poet speaks of scheming evildoers

who whet their tongue like a sword,
aim (as) their arrow a bitter word.

At least the first of these images had antecedents in more ancient Canaanite poetry: when the envoys of Yammu speak in the god's

⁴⁰ *Il.* 1. 249; *Ps.* 119. 103, cf. 19. 11(10) (Brown, 313); *Prov.* 5. 3.

⁴¹ *Erra* I 93, IV 129; *Ps.* 5. 10, *Prov.* 6. 24, 7. 5, 26. 28, 28. 23, etc.; *Sol.* 34. 3, [Aesch.] *P.V.* 647; the word is a plausible conjecture at *Thgn.* 96.

⁴² *Ps.* 55. 22(21), *Prov.* 15. 1, cf. 25. 15, *Job.* 41. 3 (=Heb. 40. 27); *Il.* 1. 582, *Od.* 1. 56, al.; Bogan, 303 f.

⁴³ *Hes. Op.* 194, 258, 262, *Thgn.* 1147, etc.; *Theodicy* 279 f., *En. cl.* VII 39; *Prov.* 4. 24, 6. 12, 19. 1; Bogan, 414 f.

assembly to demand the surrender of Baal, 'a whetted sword (was) their tongue'. Both images find echoes in the language of Greek tragedy. Sophocles speaks of a 'whetted tongue' (γλῶσσα τεθηγμένη), and the Prometheus poet of 'whetted words'. Aeschylus speaks of a tongue 'shooting arrows untimely', τοξεύσασα μὴ τὰ καίρια, that is, voicing ill judged and hurtful remarks.⁴⁴

Mental and emotional states

Narrative poetry deals in events that arouse emotional reactions in their participants. Sometimes they make them weep. This does not, in itself, constitute a significant point of contact between Greek and Near Eastern poetic traditions. Verbal parallels in the expression of this idea, however, may carry more weight. The Homeric formula τὼ δέ οἱ ὄσσε δακρυόφιν πλησθεν/πίμπλαντο, 'and his eyes filled with tears', is exactly matched in the *Gilgamesh* epic: *ēnāšu imillā* [*dīmta*], 'his eyes were full of [tears]', or in the Old Babylonian version *inā ša En]kidu imlā dīmtam*, '[En]kidu's eyes] filled with tears'.⁴⁵ Another form of expression, found in several variants in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, refers to the tears running down the cheeks: θαλερόν δὲ κατείβετο δάκρυ πικρῶν, or the equivalent. This may be put beside the Babylonian formula *eli dūr app išu illakā dīmāšu*, literally 'over the (side) wall of his nose were going his twin (streams of) tears'.⁴⁶

Ugaritic and Hittite texts also supply occasional parallels for Homeric weeping idiom. Twice in the *Iliad* a hero who is about to make a lachrymose speech is described as standing and shedding tears like a fountain whose water pours down a steep rock-face. In a fragment of the Hittite version of *Gilgamesh*, Enkidu relates his doom-laden dream, and then 'he lay down before Gilgamesh, and his tears [flowed] like irrigation channels' before he spoke again. We cannot say whether the simile was in the Akkadian original, but it is paralleled in other Hittite texts.⁴⁷

In order to continue his story, the poet may inform us that the person in question wept to the point of satiety:

But when she was sated in her heart with weeping,

⁴⁴ *Ps.* 64. 4(3), cf. 57. 5(4); *KTU* I. 2 i 32 f.; *Soph. Aj.* 584, [Aesch.] *P.V.* 311, Aesch. *Supp.* 146, cf. other passages cited by Johansen-Whittle ad loc.

⁴⁵ *Il.* 17. 695, 23. 396, al.; *Gilg.* (OBV) Yale fr. ii, (SBV) II iv 10.

⁴⁶ *Il.* 24. 794, cf. 22. 491 δαδάκρυνται δὲ παρειαί, *Od.* 4. 198, 223, 8. 522, 16. 190; *Gilg.* XI 137, 291, *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iv 52; cf. Hecker, 178 f.

⁴⁷ *Il.* 9. 14, 16. 3; Laroche, 18 fr. 8. 18 (Dalley, 84); *Ullikummi* II B i 29 f. (Hoffner, 56 § 33; followed immediately by speech); *Song of Hedammu*, fr. 5 (Hoffner, 49 § 52; sequel lost). The *Gilgamesh* and *Ullikummi* parallels were noted by I. McNicoll, *An. Stud.* 13, 1963, 239. Cf. also *Jer.* 9. 1, *Lam.* 3. 48 (Bogan, 143 f.).

the noble lady prayed first to Artemis:
'Artemis, lady goddess . . .'

We may compare the passage in the Baal epic where 'Anat walls and lacerates herself for her dead brother.

Until she was sated with weeping, she was drinking tears like wine.
(Then) she cried out aloud to the light of the gods, Shapash:
'Bring me, I beg you, Baal the victorious.'⁴⁸

In Homer both thoughts and emotions are commonly located in the θυμός, properly the 'spirit' (it is cognate with the Latin and Sanskrit words for 'smoke'), but often most conveniently rendered as 'heart'; it alternates with the more physiological terms φρένες and κραδίη. In the Semitic traditions it is the noun *libb* in its various local manifestations (Akk. *libbu*, Ug. *lb(b)*, Heb. *lēb*, *lēbāb*, *libb-*) that is most often named as the relevant organ. It means 'the inside' in a not very precisely defined sense. We cannot establish a close equation between it and any of the Greek words, but what is more important is that they have parallel functions in a series of phrases. Of a person rejoicing, for example, one may say, in both poetic Greek and in the Semitic languages, either 'he rejoiced in his heart', or 'his heart rejoiced'.⁴⁹

The θυμός (or φρένες) and the *libb* are where one puts away words in order to remember and take account of them, as we say, 'to take them to heart'. In Greek epic one urges someone to take notice of what he is being told by saying σὺ δὲ ταῦτα τεῶν ἐνικάρθης θυμῷ, 'and lay these things down in your *thūmos*' or σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σήϊσιν, 'drop it into your *phrenes*'. It is much the same when we read of Enkidu and Shamhat that

he heard her words, he agreed with her speech:
the woman's advice had fallen to his *libbu*,

or that Enlil on hearing the gods' report about Anzu 'put their word [on his *libbu*]', or that Nergal, having received instruction on what he must do in the underworld, did likewise with the word of Namtar. In a letter from the king of Ugarit to his mother, he tells her that in the event of a Hittite attack 'you must not be afraid, nor put anything in your *lb*'; this can be rendered precisely in Greek as μηδὲν ἐνθύμιον ποιήσῃ. In the

⁴⁸ *Od.* 20. 59–61, cf. 4. 541, 10. 499, *Il.* 22. 427; *KTU* 1. 6 i 9–12 (Caquot–Sznycer, 254).

⁴⁹ *Il.* 7. 189 γήθησε δὲ θυμῷ, 13. 494 θυμός ... γεγῆται; *Erra* I 14 and many other Akkadian texts, cf. *AHW* s.v. *hadû* III G 1. 1d, II. 1c, *kabattu* 3a, *libbu* A 4a; Ps. 13. 6(5), *Exod.* 4. 14, *Zeph.* 3. 14, al. In the last passage it is 'in your whole heart' (*bkol-lēb*), which has its counterpart in the phrase παντὶ θυμῷ, used in different senses by Pindar (*Pyth.* 9. 96, *Nem.* 5. 31) and Aeschylus (*Ag.* 233, *Eum.* 738).

Old Testament too, as in Hesiod and Homer, the recipient of an important lesson is exhorted to 'take it into your heart'.⁵⁰

It is in accord with this that the heart appears as the seat of knowledge or conviction. Homer sometimes uses an expression in which the nouns *phrēn* and *thūmos* are coupled; someone is made to say 'I know this well κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν', which might be roughly rendered 'in heart and spirit'. We find a curiously similar coupling of a noun with a less physiological word when Joshua tells the elders of Israel 'you all know in your heart (*lēbāb*) and in your soul (*nēpeš*) that not a single thing has failed of all the good things that Yahweh your god spoke of concerning you'.⁵¹

The 'heart' is also a place where one may plot evil: κακὰ μῆσατο θυμῷ, κακὰ δὲ φρεσὶ μῆδετο ἔργα. So too in Akkadian:

The eagle plotted evil in its heart,
it plotted in its heart evil.⁵²

One can be said to 'lift up' one's heart to wrongdoing or to excessive pride. For example, a Greek elegist writes that the folly of youth 'raises up the heart (ἐξαίρει θυμόν) of many men to go astray', and a Hebrew psalmist praises 'the one clean of hands, the one pure of heart, who does not raise up his spirit (*nēpeš*) to vanity'.⁵³ 'Heart' may also stand for the particular attitude or frame of mind adopted by its owner, as when we hear of a band of warriors who 'all have one heart', ἓνα (φρεσὶ) θυμόν ἔχοντες, that is, they all share a common resolve. The same idiom occurs in an Akkadian proverb: *ana qarrādi gitmālūti ša ištēn libba taknu mannūa iār*? 'Who will I find to go against fully-fledged warriors who have one (single) heart constituted?'⁵⁴

The heart appears further as an agent in its own right. In Greek one's θυμός (sometimes coupled with κραδίη) can be said to urge one to follow some course of action: it κελεύει or κέλεται or ὀτρύνει. Similar expressions are to be found in Semitic languages. At the opening of *Erra*

⁵⁰ *Hes. Op.* 27, 107, etc.; *Gilg.* (OBV) Pennsylvania fr. ii 26, *Anzu* I 43, *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (NBV) vi 16; *KTU* 2. 30. 23 f. (S. Segert, *A Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1984, 134 § 83. 4); *Ezek.* 3. 10, cf. *Deut.* 4. 39, 1 Ki. 8. 47, al. (Bogan, 155).

⁵¹ *Josh.* 23. 14. On *nēpeš* cf. above, p. 151. In Ugaritic poetry (*KTU* 1. 6 in 19, 17 in 13) *ḫpš* occurs in conjunction with *bīty*, making the phrase 'the spirit in my breast', a parallel to the Homeric formula θυμός ἐνὶ στήθεσσι. There is an analogous use in Hebrew, whereby *lēb* is reinforced by *bītkī* 'within me' or *bītk nē 'ay* 'within my innards' (Ps. 143. 4, 22. 15(14); Bogan, 151).

⁵² *Il.* 6. 157, 21. 19, al.; *Etana* II 37 f. (OBV had something similar); cf. *En. el.* I 111, which has *anšu* (belly, insides) instead of *libbu*; Hecker, 174.

⁵³ *Thgn.* 630, cf. 'Simon.' *Epigr.* 26A. 4 Page, *Eur. Alc.* 346, etc.; Ps. 24. 4, cf. *Hos.* 4. 8.

⁵⁴ *Il.* 13. 487, 15. 710, 16. 219, 17. 267, cf. *Od.* 3. 128; *BWL* 268 iii 6 (bilingual).

and Ishum it is related that Erra was astir in his dwelling: 'his heart demanded of him the making of war'. In the Keret epic we read:

Yassib too sat in the palace
and his heart instructed him:
'Go to your father, Yassib,' etc.

And in Exodus 'every man whose heart (*lēbāb*) raised him up and every one whose spirit (*rūah*) urged him' brought the Lord's offering.⁵⁵

Man's feeling that he is not always his own master, but on occasion overcome by an independent force or impulse, finds further expression in phrases which speak of someone being 'seized' or 'caught' by some emotion, or by sleep, or by drink. Just as Homer says 'when Hector saw him, trembling seized him (*ἔλε τρόμος*), he did not dare to stay there, but left the gates behind and fled in alarm', so a psalmist relates of the enemy kings,

as they saw it, they were stunned,
they were terrified, they fled;
trembling seized them there.⁵⁶

As Homer speaks of sleep taking, seizing, or holding people (*αἰεῖν* *μάρπτειν*, *ἔχειν*), so Akkadian poets speak of it 'seizing' or 'not seizing' someone.⁵⁷ And as Homer says 'the wine has hold of your wits' (*ἡ μὲν σε οἶνος ἔχει φρένας*), so the fox in an Assyrian fable says 'the beer has me seized' (*šikāru šabtannima*).⁵⁸

Sleep can also be conceived as falling or pouring over one. In Homer it may be 'poured gentle about' the weary one (*νήδυμος ἀμφιχυθείς*), or a god may pour it over him. Both Akkadian and Hebrew use verbs meaning 'pour' in this connection. On waking from his week-long slumber in the house of Ut-napishtim, Gilgamesh says 'Scarcely had sleep poured itself over me when you straightway touched me and woke me!' Isaiah proclaims that

Yahweh has poured out over you
a breath of deep sleep.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ II. 7. 68, 8. 6, 10. 220, 319, 534, 12. 300, etc.; *Erra* I 6; *KTU* 1. 16 vi 26 (here *ggnh*, 'his insides'); Exod. 35. 21, cf. 25. 2, 35. 29.

⁵⁶ II. 22. 136 f., cf. 5. 862, 19. 14, al.; Ps. 48. 6(5) f., cf. Isa. 33. 14, Jer. 49. 24. A similar expression in the *Song of Ullikummi*, I C ii 9 f. (Hoffner, 53 § 8), 'trembling seized the house, fear seized the servants'.

⁵⁷ *Od.* 9. 372, 15. 7, 19. 511, 20. 56, etc.; *Atr. S.* rev. iv 3, 8, 41, *Gilg.* VIII ii 14.

⁵⁸ *Od.* 18. 331, 391, cf. *Thgn.* 506 f.; *BWL* 216. 47.

⁵⁹ II. 14. 164, 23. 63, 24. 445, *Od.* 7. 286, 12. 338, 19. 590, al.; *Gilg.* XI 220, cf. *En. cl.* I 64 f., *BWL* 52. 11, *Erra* I 82; Isa. 29. 10; Bogan, 240 f.

in the Homeric formula *ὕπνος ἐπὶ βλεφάροισιν ἐπιπτεν*, 'sleep fell upon his eyelids', may be put beside the recurrent verse in the Gilgamesh

Sleep, that is poured out on the peoples, fell upon him,

of the expression used in the narrative of David's nocturnal excursion into Hail's camp, 'the slumber of Yahweh had fallen upon them'.⁶⁰ Fear has something that can be said to 'fall' upon one, or on one's mind, in both Greek and Hebrew.⁶¹

Miscellaneous expressions

Homer has a phrase for 'the whole of animal creation': it is *πάντα, ὅσα τε γαίαν ἐπὶ πνέει τε καὶ ἔρπει*, 'everything that breathes and moves upon the earth'. A shorter equivalent is *πάντα, ὅποσα ζῶει τε καὶ ἔρπει*, 'everything that lives and moves'. The idea is similarly expressed in Hebrew 'all flesh that moves upon the earth', 'everything that has the breath of life in its nostrils', 'everything that moves upon the earth', 'every creeping thing that lives'.⁶²

Another comprehensive expression is 'all that is under the sun'. In Homer Zeus says that he honoured Ilios 'of all the cities of men that live under the sun and the starry sky'. Elegists refer to the human race as 'all men that the sun looks upon'. This may be regarded as equivalent to 'everyone alive', as 'seeing the sunlight' is a common poetic antonym of death. Alcestis in Euripides' play is judged 'far the noblest woman of those under the sun', and when she goes to her death her child laments that she 'is no longer under the sun'.⁶³ In a seventh-century Assyrian text there is an obscure reference to 'mountain beer, as much as exists, as much as the sun shines on'. Here the life/death antithesis plays no part, but in a number of later Semitic sources it does. In the epitaph of the early fifth-century Sidonian king Tabnit, the curse on whoever breaks into the tomb includes the words 'may you have no seed among the living under the sun or resting-place with the shades'; in the case of Tabnit's successor Eshmunazar, it is 'renown among the living under the sun'. In the numerous occurrences of 'under the sun' in Ecclesiastes, the meaning is usually 'during life'.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Od.* 2. 398, al.; *Gilg.* IV i 16, 46, iii 7; I Sam. 26. 12, cf. Gen. 15. 12 (Bogan, *ibid.*). For the eyelids as the receptors of sleep Bogan refers to Ps. 132. 4, Prov. 6. 4.

⁶¹ II. 17. 625, *Od.* 14. 88; Exod. 15. 16 (*Song of the Sea*), Ps. 55. 5, etc.; Bogan, 384.

⁶² II. 17. 447, *Od.* 18. 131, *Hymn. Dem.* 365; Gen. 7. 21, 22, 8. 19, 9. 3.

⁶³ II. 4. 44, Sol. 1-4. 2, *Thgn.* 168, 616, 850, Eur. *Alc.* 151, 395.

⁶⁴ *CPLM* no. 32 obv. 5; *KAI* 13-14 (*SSI* iii. 103. 7, 106. 12; *ANET* 662); Eccl. 1. 9, 14, etc. (Bogan, 31); cf. Albright, 196 (repr. 226).

A related idea is that of 'fame under heaven'. Odysseus speaks of Agamemnon 'who now has the greatest fame under heaven' (ὕπουράνιον κλέος), and the phrase also occurs in the Doloneia. In several passages of the Old Testament we read of a people's name being blotted out or made to perish 'from under heaven' (*mittaḥat haššāmāyim*).⁶⁵

We saw in chapter 3 that the Greeks and Semitic peoples share the concept that dying means going down into the earth. By an inversion of this, the earth may be represented as an agent that takes and holds the deceased person. For example, when Helen wonders why she cannot see her brothers in the Achaean army, Homer explains that 'the life-growing earth already held them fast'. An analogous expression occurs in the twelfth tablet of the Gilgamesh epic. When Enkidu goes down to the underworld and contravenes all the taboos that have been impressed on him, he finds that he cannot leave.

Nam[ar did not seize him, Asakku did not seize him, Earth [seized him];
the croucher, merciless Ukur, did not seize him, Earth [seized him];
he did not fall where men were fighting], Earth [seized him].⁶⁶

Another context in which the earth takes on an active role is that of animal sacrifice or other killing. The victim's blood seeps into the ground, and the earth is said to 'drink' it. We find this in Aeschylus, and much earlier in Babylonian poetry:

Etana kept praying daily to Shamash:
'You have eaten, Shamash, the thickest cuts of my sheep;
Earth, you have drunk (or: Earth has drunk) the blood of my lambs.'⁶⁷

In Homer the moistening of the earth by shed blood is remarked, but without the drinking metaphor: 'his dark blood flowed forth, and soaked the earth'. Archilochus spoke somewhere of the soil being fertilized or 'fattened' (παίvesθαι) by the blood of men slain in battle. These ideas find parallels in the Tukulti-Ninurta epic, where Kaštiliaš sends a boastful message to the Assyrian king saying

'This is the day when your people's blood will irrigate the steppes and meadows,

⁶⁵ *Od* 9.264, *Il* 10.212, *Deut* 7.24, 9.14, 29.19(20), 2 *Ki*. 14.27; Bogan, 272.

⁶⁶ *Il*. 3.243 cf. 2.699, *Od*. 11.301, *Archil* 196a.12, *Ale*. 283.13, etc., *Gilg*. XII.51.1 (supplements guaranteed by repetitions at 58-61, 65-8, 72-5).

⁶⁷ *Etana* II.131-3, *Aesch. Sept* 736, *Chio* 66, *Finn* 979. Cf. also the Hittite military oath quoted on p. 22, and *Gen*. 4.11, 'the ground, which has opened its mouth to take your brother's blood from your hand'.

and in Isaiah:

For there is a sacrifice for Yahweh in Bozrah,
and a great slaughter in the land of Edom ...
and their land will be drenched (or made drunk) with blood,
and their soil will be made rich with fat.⁶⁸

Archilochus is not the only Greek poet to describe rich soil in terms of (animal) fat. Homer uses *πίον* and *πιαρ* in this connection. The fertility of the Cyclopes' land is expressed in the phrase *μάλα πιαρ ὑπ' οὐδας*, 'there is indeed fat under the earth's surface'. This may remind us of the biblical expression 'the fat of the land', *hēleb hā 'āreš*, though that actually refers to the land's choicest produce, not its inner quality. (Loser in sense is Isaiah: 'My beloved had a vineyard *b'qēren ben-Admen*, on a hill of great fertility (lit. a hill the son of oil)').⁶⁹

According to a popular conception attested in early Greece and the Near East, mankind was formed out of earth or clay. To make the first woman, Hephaestus mixed earth with water, and according to Xenophanes 'we are all born from earth and water'. Adam is formed from the soil (*'ādāmāh*), Enkidu from clay, and so on.⁷⁰ In the seventh book of the *Iliad*, when none of the Achaeans responds to Hector's challenge to single combat, Menelaus reproaches them for their cowardice, calling them *Ἀχαιῖδες, οὐκέτι Ἀχαιοί*—women, no longer men⁷¹—and saying

You can all turn to water and earth,
sitting there in your spiritless ranks, inglorious.

The idea seems to be that, devoid of life and action, they are in danger of reverting to their original inert material constituents. Elsewhere a dead man is occasionally spoken of as becoming earth or dust, but there is no parallel in Greek for the wider use in the Homeric passage. In Akkadian poetry, on the other hand, 'turning (or returning) to clay' is used not only of death, as when Gilgamesh laments that 'my friend whom I love has turned to clay', but more generally of reducing present vitality to an

⁶⁸ *Il*. 13.655, cf. 17.360 f., 21.119, 23.15; *Archil*. 292, cf. *Aesch. Sept* 587; *Tuk.-Nin*. iv A 12, cf. *CAD* D 78b; *Isa*. 34.6 f.

⁶⁹ *Od*. 9.135, cf. *Hymn. Ap.* 60; *Gen*. 45.18, *Isa*. 5.1; similarly *šmanē hā 'āreš*, 'the oils of the land', in poems in *Gen*. 27.28, 39.

⁷⁰ *Iles. Op.* 61, cf. *Th*. 571, *Xenoph.* DK 21 B 33, *Gen*. 2.7, cf. *Isa*. 64.8, *Job* 33.6; *Gilg*. II.11.1, *Atr*. 1.203 ff. (clay and a god's blood), *Ludlul* IV 40, *Theodicy* 277; already in Sumerian, *Enki and Ninkasi* 30 ff. (Jacobsen, 156; Bottéro-Kramer, 190).

⁷¹ *Il*. 7.96. For this reproach (also at 2.235) cf. 8.163, *Archil*. 94.3 (with West [1974], 127), and Fraenkel on *Aesch. Ag*. 1625. For Near Eastern parallels see *Jer*. 51.30, 'the warriors of Babylon have stopped fighting ... their heroism has dried up, they have become women', *Nah*. 3.13, *PLM* no. 30.4.

ineffectual state. When Anzu's seizure of power is reported to Anu, it is said of him that

His wor[ld has become] like (that of) the god of Duranki (= Enlil):
his [enemy] turns to clay.

When the Flood devastates the world, the gods themselves are appalled and the Mistress of the Gods cries

That day ought to have returned to clay,
on which I spoke evil in the assembly of the gods.

Ut-napishtim relates how, as the waters abated, he surveyed the scene and saw that 'stillness was established: the whole of mankind had returned to clay'.⁷²

The annulment of less tangible things, such as offences, may be expressed in terms of their being carried away by the wind. Apologizing to Odysseus for his earlier derogatory remarks, Euryalus says 'if anything bad has been said, may the storm-winds snatch it up and bear it away'. We find similar phrases in Akkadian:

May the storm-wind []
carry acts of violence off out of Akkad.

He made the wind bear away my offences.

May the wind bear away the fault that I have committed.⁷³

Iniquity may be so great as to be described as reaching up to heaven. The arrogant bullying of Penelope's suitors is said to 'reach the firmament'; there is no reason to take this as meaning that the knowledge of it has spread as far as heaven, even if fame is sometimes said to reach the sky.⁷⁴ There is a good Hebrew parallel which, though later in date, is not likely to derive from Greek. Ezra prayed to God in shame because 'our sins have multiplied above head-high, and our guilt has grown up to heaven'.⁷⁵

Achilles addresses Agamemnon as a man 'clothed in shamelessness', ἀναιδείην ἐπειμένε. This strikes us as a remarkable metaphor and one alien to ordinary Greek idiom. It is difficult to find anything to compare

⁷² H. 7. 99 f.; Thgt. 878 = 1070b, etc.; Gilg. X ii 12, Anzu (OBV) II 21 f. (≈ SBV I 110 f.), Gilg. XI 118 f., 132 f. cf. BWL 108. 6, Erra I 74, IV 150; Hecker, 170. For the idea of man returning to the dust from which he was made cf. Gen. 3. 19, Job 10. 9.

⁷³ Od. 8. 408 f.; Šar tamhārt (EA 359) obv. 16 f., Ludlul III 60, Seux 142. 57 (= ANET 392; Foster, 687), cf. 210, 401.

⁷⁴ As is shouting. H. 2. 153 ἀύτη δ' οὐρανὸν ἵκεν, etc.; 1 Sam. 5. 12 'the cry of the city went up to heaven' (Bogan, 126).

⁷⁵ Od. 15. 329 = 17. 565, cf. Arist. Rhet. 1408b13; Ezra 9. 6, cf. 2 Chr. 28. 9 (rage).

with it apart from another Homeric formula, the one that characterizes the two Aiantes as 'clothed in furious valour', θούριν ἐπειμένοι ἀλκήν. Both of these phrases, however, are in accord with Semitic usage. In Akkadian, gods and kings may be described as 'clothed in' radiance, magnificence, and the like. Hebrew offers a wider range of metaphorical garments. I quote a few of the aptest parallels for the Homeric phrases. For the first:

Therefore arrogance is their necklace,
they mantle themselves in violence.

May my accusers be clothed in disgrace,
and wrapped in their shame as with a gown.⁷⁶

And for the second:

Yahweh is king, with loftiness he is robed;
robed is Yahweh, with strength he is girt.

Rouse yourself, rouse yourself, be clothed with strength,
O forearm of Yahweh!⁷⁷

The Homeric warrior goes 'trusting in his strength', ἀλλὰ πεποιθώς (ἐκ τοῦ βίηφι, σθένει, ἡνοπέη, etc.). So in Assurbanipal's hymn to Aššur the god is praised as *anja emūq ramānīšu taklum*, 'trusting in his own strength'. When Gilgamesh sets out on his expedition against Humbaba, the elders of Uruk counsel him, 'Do not trust in your strength'. There are many other instances of the expression in Akkadian.⁷⁸

The doughty warrior has his foil, in the world of epic, in the beautiful woman; he makes love as well as war. One Homeric formula for introducing the mention of a young woman or girl is to call her 'the most beautiful of the daughters of X', Πελίαιο (or Πριάμοιο or Ἀτρεΐδαιο) θυγατρῶν εἰδος ἀρίστη, even if in another place one of her sisters is to receive the same accolade. In an Ugaritic poem a similarly structured expression is used of a goddess: 'the maiden 'Anat, the (most) charming one of the sisters of Baal'.⁷⁹

Love-making is recognized as a basic norm of men's and women's life. In the passages which refer to Agamemnon's avowal that he has not had intercourse with Briseis, what he actually certifies is

not to have ever mounted her bed and united with her,

⁷⁶ Il. 1. 149, cf. 9. 372; 7. 164, al.; CAD s.v. *labāsu* 1b 3'; Ps. 73. 6, 109. 29, cf. 36. 26, 109. 19 (cursing), Ezek. 7. 27 (despair), 26. 16, Job 8. 22.

⁷⁷ Ps. 93. 1, Isa. 51. 9; Gordon (1955), 68. See further the lexica s.v. *lābaš*.

⁷⁸ CPLM no. 1 obv. 32, Gilg. OBV Yale fr. vi 22 ≈ SBV III i 2; AHw s.v. *taklū* G II 3a.

⁷⁹ Il. 2. 715, 3. 124, 6. 252, 13. 365, 378, Hymn. Dem. 146; KTU 1. 10 ii 15 f., iii 10 f.

as is the norm (θέμις) for humans, for men and women.

Beside this we may set the following lines from *Nergal and Ereshkigal*:

He [desired in] his heart what belongs to man and woman:
they embraced each other, the two of them,
they went passionately in to the bed.

Lot's elder daughter complains to her sister that there is not a man anywhere 'to come onto us as is the way of all the earth'.⁸⁰

The natural act has equally natural consequences. The birth of a child after the due term is recorded by a Greek poet in some such words as

But when the months and the days were fulfilled
as the year revolved and the seasons came on,
she bore...

An almost identical expression appears in an Akkadian birth-incantation which contains the myth of the Moon-god and the cow:

When her days were ended, when her months were completed,
the cow knelt down, the cow went into labour.⁸¹

For the 'revolving years' we may refer to a formula used in Ugaritic poetry:

Seven years were completed,
eight revolutions of time (*nqpt* ʿd).

The root *nqp*, 'go round, make a circuit, encompass', is also found in Hebrew in connection with the cycle of festivals:

Add year on year, let the festivals go round.⁸²

In one of the Ugaritic passages, instead of 'seven years were completed', we find 'seven years El had made full'. In the Old Testament too time can be represented as made full by God: 'No woman

shall miscarry or be barren in your land: I will make full the number of your days'. These expressions have analogies in Greek verse. Hesiod speaks of Zeus completing or fulfilling (ἐκτελέσαι) sixty winter days, and Solon speaks of God completing (τελέσαι) seven more years of a boy's life.⁸³ Words meaning literally 'fill' or 'full', such as ἐκπύρηνμι, πληρώω, πλείος, πλήρης, are sometimes used of completing or completed periods of time, though in the instances known to me the verbs have human subjects or are medio-passive, 'the days were made full' etc. These again correspond to common Semitic usages.⁸⁴

Another expression to do with time is 'night and day' as an adverbial phrase, equivalent to 'continually'. In Homer it is usually νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμῶν or ἡμέρας; Semonides has it in the form προνὲξ προῆμαρ. In Babylonian epic we find the formula *mūšī u urrī* 'nights and days' (accusative plural) or *mūša (u) urra* 'night (and) day' (accusative singular).⁸⁵ In other passages it is 'day and night', and both forms of the phrase are also common in prose. In Hebrew 'night and day', *laylāh wəyōm*, is the regular idiom.⁸⁶

Where we would tend to say 'for two days' or 'for three days', the Homeric poet may say 'for two days and two nights', 'for three days and three nights'. Similarly in Hebrew: 'And it rained on the earth for forty days and forty nights'; 'he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights'; 'and they sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights'.⁸⁷

To express the idea of 'all the time', 'for ever', Homer often uses the phrase ἡμέρας πάντα, 'all days'. This is not normal Greek idiom. However, it corresponds closely to the common Hebrew expression *kol-hayyāmīm*, 'all the days'.⁸⁸

In the second book of the *Iliad* Odysseus, reminding the discontented army of the victory prophesied by Calchas from the portent seen at the beginning of the expedition, refers to the event as having occurred

yesterday and the day before, when at Aulis the Achaean ships
gathered, bearing ill for Priam and the Trojans.

Every reader must surely have felt disconcerted by the expression 'yesterday and the day before', χθιζά τε καὶ πρωιζά, even if he knows

⁸⁰ *Il.* 9.133 f. cf. 275 f., 19.176 f.; *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) iv 8'-10' (restored from vi 35 f.); Gen. 19.31 (Bogan, 77).

⁸¹ *Hymn Ap.* 349-51 (also in other contexts: *Od.* 11.294 f., al.); a similar formula in *Iles* 74.58 f., W. Röllig, *Or.* N.S. 54, 1985, 262 A 20 (Foster, 891; a variant has the 'months' and 'days' phrases reversed). In Hittite the months are counted out one by one: 'The first month, the second month, the third month, the fourth month, the fifth month, the sixth month, the seventh month, the eighth month, the ninth month passed, and the tenth month arrived. Appu's wife bore a son' (Hoffner, 64 § 14, cf. 65 § 6); but we also find the abbreviated form 'The tenth month arrived, and the woman bore a son' (ibid. 64 § 15).

⁸² *KTU* 1.23.66 f., cf. 12 ii 45 f. (Gordon [1955], 71); *Iso.* 29.1, cf. *Job* 1.5 'when the days of the banquet had gone round'.

⁸³ *KTU* 1.12 ii 45 f.; *Exod.* 23.26; *Hes. Op.* 565, *Sol.* 27.3.

⁸⁴ See *CAD* s.v. *malû* 4b and 9b; Hebrew lexica s.v. *mālē*.

⁸⁵ *Atr.* 138, *Gilg.* VIII i 7, *Erra* 11b 22; with *imma* 'heat of the day' instead of *urra*, *En. el.* 130. Cf. Hecker, 171.

⁸⁶ 1 *Ki.* 8.29, *Iso.* 27.3, *Eth.* 4.16; Bogan, 215 f.

⁸⁷ *Od.* 5.388, 9.74, 10.142, 17.515; *Gen.* 7.12, 1 *Sam.* 30.12, *Job* 2.13; Bogan, 275.

⁸⁸ Bogan, 116.

that this is a common Greek idiom for 'the other day', 'recently'. The gathering at Aulis was not 'the other day' but nine years before. It is true that Herodotus uses the phrase referring to the time of Hesiod and Homer, which he puts some four hundred years before himself, but in the context he still means to say 'just recently', in relation to the whole span of human history. Now Akkadian and Hebrew have a similar expression, *ina timāli šalši ūme*, *ʾmōl* (or *ʾetmōl*) *šilšōm*, literally 'yesterday (and) three days ago' (that is, by inclusive reckoning, 'yesterday and the day before'), and this does not mean 'recently' but more generally 'before now, in the past'. It may refer to the whole of past time, or to some or any past time that is contrasted with the present.⁸⁹ If we translate the Homeric phrase as 'before' or 'that other time', as the sense requires, we shall be giving it a meaning closer to that of the Semitic idiom than to that which it otherwise has in Greek.

SIMILES

At the end of the last chapter the technique and typology of the poetic simile were briefly discussed. It was shown that the form and structure of Homer's similes have detailed parallels in Near Eastern literatures. It is now time to consider their substance. It is appropriate to do so here, because the combination of similar form and similar content naturally leads in many cases to rather similar wording. For instance, when the growth of a young champion is likened to that of a fast-growing shoot the statement comes out in very similar guise in Greek and in Hebrew:

ὃ δ' ἀνέδραμεν ἔρπει ἴσος.

And he ran up just like a sucker.

wayya'al kayyōnēq.

And he climbed like a sucker.⁹⁰

We shall see more examples; I shall not call attention to them specially.

The Homeric hero is routinely compared to a god.⁹¹ When Enkidu first challenges Gilgamesh, the latter is called 'Gilgamesh-like-a-god', to emphasize the majesty of the man that the newcomer was taking on. Enkidu himself had 'become like a god', in the prostitute's words, after she converted him from the animal life to human values. This could be

taken as a subjective statement, equivalent to 'I look upon you as on a god'. So in the Middle Assyrian version of *Etana* the eagle, saved from the pit by Etana, 'looked upon him as on a god'. The expression has an exact counterpart in the Homeric θεὸν ὥς εἰσopώσιν. We may also recall Jacob's saying to Esau, 'for in truth, I see your face as if seeing the face of God'.⁹²

Another Homeric formula refers to honouring someone like a god, θεὸς ὥς τίετο δῆμῳ and the like. A parallel may be cited from a letter of king Tušratta of Mitanni to Amenophis III, in which he claims to have treated the Pharaoh's envoy and interpreter entirely *comme il faut*: 'I have exa[lted] them like gods, and given them many presents.'⁹³

A common way of praising a woman's beauty is to say that she resembles or is equal to a goddess. The comparison may be to immortals in general: γυνὴ εἰκυῖα θεῆσι 'the lady like unto goddesses', and so forth. A very similar phrase occurs in a Babylonian poem. The righteous Sufferer sees in a dream 'a maiden, fair [her] fea[tures], a queen [...], equal to the gods'. Alternatively a woman may be compared to a particular goddess. For example, Homer can speak of 'Hermione, who had the form of golden Aphrodite'. By classical standards this may seem dangerously presumptuous. But it would have raised no eyebrows at Ugarit. Keret demands the king of Udm's daughter, Hry,

the (most) charming one of the family, your firstborn,
whose charm is like the charm of 'Anat,
her beauty like the beauty of 'Agart.

This passage, incidentally, shows another feature that we also find in Homer: different aspects of the person are compared to different deities. So Agamemnon, as he marshals his army, is described as

in eyes and head like Zeus whose sport is thunder,
like Ares as to his baldric, his chest like Poseidon.⁹⁴

In the two lines immediately following, Agamemnon is likened to a bull who stands out amid the herd. The bull is a commonplace image for the Mesopotamian king from the third millennium on. The Sumerian kings Gudea and Shulgi used it of themselves; Hammurabi calls himself 'the aggressive wild bull who charges his enemies'. The pre-eminence of Gilgamesh is expressed in bull similes:

⁸⁹ *Il.* 2. 303; *Hdt.* 2. 53. 1; J. N. Postgate, *Iraq* 35, 1973, 22 line 36; *Gen.* 31. 2, *Exod.* 3. 14, *Josh.* 3. 4, and often; Bogan, 14; Gordon (1952), 94.

⁹⁰ *Il.* 18. 56, 437; *Isa.* 53. 2; Bogan, 170.

⁹¹ Cf. above, p. 132.

⁹² *Qilg.* OBV Pennsylvania fr. v 21 = SBV II ii 45; I iv 34; *Etana* MAV I/D 6; *Od.* 8. 173, cf. *Il.* 12. 112, also 9. 155, 16. 605, 22. 391, etc., *Hes. Th.* 91; *Gen.* 33. 10 (Bogan, 79-83).

⁹³ *Il.* 5. 78, etc.; *EA* 21. 24-6.

⁹⁴ *Iudith* III 31 f.; *Od.* 4. 14; *KTU* I. 14 vi 25-8; *Il.* 2. 478 f.

Outstanding above (other) kings, far-famed, of great stature,
a hero born of Uruk, a charging wild bull.

In Uruk sheepfold he would [go about],
display his might like a wild bull, his head held high.

And like a wild bull he displays his might over the people.

Sennacherib informs posterity that he set out from Aššur at the front of his army 'like a powerful wild bull'.⁹⁵

Another use of the bull in similes is with reference to its bellow. 'The Scamander overflows its banks 'bellowing like a bull', and so too the Flood in *Atrahasis* 'was roaring like a bull'. The same phrase is used of the earth as the human race multiplies upon it. We find the comparison also in the Hurro-Hittite tradition: 'And they went to the place of assembly, and all the gods began to bellow like bulls at Ullikummi the basalt'.⁹⁶

One might have expected the warrior hero's war-cry to be compared to the roar of a bull or a lion. In fact Achilles' mighty shout, to which Athena contributes, is described as ringing out like a trumpet. In the Gilgamesh epic we find, if not this, at any rate another loud instrument mentioned in a similar connection. Gilgamesh encourages Enkidu before the assault on Humbaba, saying

You have kept rubbing yourself with [pla]nts, you will not fear
[death].

let [your sho]ut be as loud as a kettledrum,
let your arms' malady depart, and [your hands'] sickness fly away!

Yahweh announces himself from Sinai with thunders and lightnings 'and the voice of a horn (*šōpar*), very strong', which continues in a terrifying crescendo. Tristram's God bids him 'raise up your voice like a horn'.⁹⁷

In the fourth book of the *Iliad* the appearance of the battalions following the Aiantes is compared to that of a black cloud bringing a rainstorm. Similarly when Keret leads out his army in the Ugaritic epic if the passage is rightly understood,

they went by thousands (as) storm-clouds

⁹⁵ Prologue to Hammurabi's Laws, iii 7; *Gilg.* 1 i 28, ii 8 (cf. 20), iv 39; Luckenbill, 50. 19. 1. 1. Engnell, 185 f.; P. D. Miller, *UF* 2, 1970, 178, 180 f., 185 (Ugaritic and Hebrew application of 'bull to persons'), Mullen, 30 f.

⁹⁶ *Il.* 21. 237, cf. *Od.* 21. 48; *Atr.* III 125, 1354, II 3; *Ullikummi* III A iv 18-20 (Hoffner, 60 f.).

⁹⁷ *Il.* 18. 219; *Gilg.* IV vi; *Exod.* 19. 16-19, *Isa.* 58. 1 (Bogan, 174).

and by ten thousands like the autumn rains.

Hammurabi records in his annals that in the sixth year of his reign (1792) he defeated a coalition of twelve kings between the towns of Akkad and Gilgau: 'I felled 14,000 of their fighting troops with the sword, I made a deluge pour down on them like Adad'.⁹⁸

In another Iliadic passage the Trojans' onset is described thus:

'They went like the fierce winds' blast
that from father Zeus' thunder goes down upon the earth
and with wondrous din engages with the brine; and there are many
waves bursting on the surging sea
with curving crests, some leading, others following:
so the Trojans in close array, some leading, others following,
glinting in bronze, came on behind their leaders.

The simile changes in the course of its development, but as the picture comes into focus it is clearly the waves, not the winds, to which the Trojans are likened. The surge of battle or of an oncoming army is seen as a 'wave' or a 'flow' (*ρῆμα*) in several other passages. In Akkadian the war-god Ninurta himself is given the title 'flood-wave of battles', *agê nūmāti*. But the image of successive waves in the Homeric passage has a closer parallel in a prophecy of Ezekiel:

Behold, I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring up against you many nations,
like the sea bringing up its waves.⁹⁹

The vast multitude of the Achaean host as it sets out from the ships towards Troy is reported to Hector as being 'like leaves, or sand'. Sand or dust appears elsewhere in early Greek poetry as the paradigm of the innumerable. It is very common also in the Near East. In the Egyptian poem about the Battle of Qadesh we read that the Hittite king 'had caused men and horses to come in very great numbers like the sand'. Similarly the Canaanites and their allies come out against Joshua as 'a great host, like the sand on the seashore in number, with horse and chariot in very great quantity'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Il.* 4. 275 ff., cf. 16. 384 ff.; *KTU* 1. 14 iv 17 f. (= n 39 f.; on the interpretation of the crucial words see Caquot-Szaycer, 517 f.); III R 7-8 ii 97 f. (E. Schrader, *Keilschriftliche Bibliothek* i, Berlin 1889, 172; *ANET* 279); cf. Schott, 83 f.

⁹⁹ *Il.* 13. 795-801, cf. 15. 381-4, *Tyrt.* 12. 22, *Aesch. Pers.* 87-90, *Sept.* 64, 111, [1076]; *Arzu* I f, *Izrek.* 26. 3 (Bogan, 124). In *Jer.* 6. 23 the sound of an army mobilizing is compared to the roaring sea.

¹⁰⁰ *Il.* 2. 800, cf. 9. 385, *Pind. Ol.* 2. 98; knowing the number of the sand as the measure of Apollo's omniscience, *Pind. Pyth.* 9. 47, *Ibid.* 1. 47; *Lichthelm.* II. 64; *Josh.* 11. 4, cf. 1 *Sam.* 13. 5, also *Gen.* 22. 17, 28. 14, 32. 12, 41. 49, 2 *Sam.* 17. 11, etc.; Bogan, 83; Krenkel, 26; Brown, 315 f.

The other paradigm of countlessness is the stars. In one of the most memorable similes in the *Iliad*, the 'Trojans' camp fires as they bivouac on the plain are likened in number to the stars that a shepherd sees on a clear windless night. We may compare a passage in the Old Babylonian Sargon epic, where it is said of a large army, apparently forty thousand strong, 'these men were spread across the fields like stars'. In an inscription recording his campaigns, Shalmaneser I (1263-34) speaks of the Qutû, 'who, like the stars of heaven, know no number'. In the Old Testament a numerous people is frequently described as being 'like the stars for multitude'. The expression can also be illustrated from a Punic inscription from about 500 BC: 'And the years for the statue of the deity in her temple, (may they be) years like El's stars.'¹⁰¹

When Achilles drives a great throng of Trojans into the Scamander, they are likened to locusts fleeing riverwards from a fire. The comparison of armies to swarms of locusts is a cliché in the inscriptions of Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Assurbanipal. In one passage the setting is a river: Sennacherib's disembarking troops 'fly' like locusts from their boats to the bank.¹⁰²

The comparison of heroes to lions is a Homeric commonplace. Yet it has often been questioned whether Homer and his audience had any direct knowledge of the lion, except as an artistic motif of oriental provenance.¹⁰³ In the Classical period, according to Herodotus (7. 125 f.), there were lions to be found to the north of Greece, but not, it is implied, in Greece itself. In Anatolia there may have been some in remote areas, but hardly in the western valleys where the Greeks were settled. They were more frequent in Syria, Palestine, and north Africa. And lion similes are at home in Near Eastern literature. As in Homer a warrior's killing of his foes is likened to a lion's killing of his prey, so the Assyrians in the Tukulti-Ninurta epic 'were killing like lions'. Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon all compare themselves to fierce lions as they commence battle or march through enemy lands.¹⁰⁴ When Sarpedon makes his assault upon the Achaean wall

like a lion reared in the mountains, who has long

¹⁰¹ *Il.* 8. 555 ff.; J. Nougayrol, *RA* 45, 1951, 169-83, line 55 (Foster, 103); *RIAA* 1. 184 lines 88 f., 2. 88. 1 obv. 5' Gen. 15. 5. 22. 17, Deut. 1. 10, 10. 22, 28. 62, Jer. 33. 22, Nah. 3. 16; *KAI* 277 = *SSJ* III. 154 no. 42; Brown, 314-16. Cf. also M. Held, *JCS* 15, 1961, 9, iv 11 f. (Old Babylonian love dialogue); *BWL* 196 c obv. 11 (*The Fox*).

¹⁰² *Il.* 21. 12; Winckler, i. 110. 73; Thureau-Dangin, line 256; Luckenbill, 75. 93; Streck, 100. 43; Schott, 88. 97. 102. In *Atr.* III iv 6 (cf. *Gdg.* X vi 30) drowned humanity is likened to dragonflies filling a river.

¹⁰³ Cf. W. Richter, *Landwirtschaft (Archaeologia Homerica, II)*, Göttingen 1968, 33; Stella (1978), 379 f.

¹⁰⁴ *Il.* 5. 161-4, 10. 485-8, 16. 487-91; *Tuk.-Nin.* iv A 39'; Winckler, i. 104. 40; Thureau-Dangin, line 420; Luckenbill, 50. 16, 51. 25; Borger, 43. 57, 97. 13; Schott, 86.

been starved of meat, and his proud heart bids him penetrate even the steading to try for the sheep; for even if he finds the herdsmen there guarding the flocks with dogs and spears, he's not minded to be chased off without a try.

The imagined scene is matched in Jeremiah, where Yahweh says of his attack on Edom:

Behold, like a lion coming up from the thickets of the Jordan against a steading, in a twinkling I will chase them away from it ... Who is the shepherd that will stand before me?¹⁰⁵

Several heroes in the Greek epic have the epithet θυμολέων, 'lion-heart', or more strictly 'a lion in spirit', and Tyrtæus has the full phrase 'with a burning lion's spirit in his breast'. This has its counterpart in the Second Book of Samuel: 'the valiant man, whose heart is as the heart of the lion'.¹⁰⁶

Elsewhere Homeric warriors are compared to wolves as they rush upon and tear at their prey. The Myrmidons, for example, arming for battle, are described as being like wolves who have caught a stag and are rending it apart, their jaws red with blood. So in Ezekiel the leaders of Israel, after first being likened to lions, are said to be 'like wolves rending the prey to shed blood'.¹⁰⁷ In another Iliadic passage the Danaans attacking the Trojans are compared to wolves attacking defenceless lambs or kids, and the Trojans turn to flight—like the terrified sheep and goats, it is implied. There are other places where the victims are compared to sheep in their helplessness:

And they, as a herd of cows or a great flock of sheep
are harried in the darkness of night by a pair of beasts
that come of a sudden in the absence of the herdsmen,
so the Achaeans were put to flight, unresisting.

This too has oriental parallels:

May the weak Akkadian fell the strong Sutean;
may one man drive away seven, like sheep!¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Il.* 12. 299-304, cf. 5. 136-43; Jer. 49. 19 = 50. 44. Two comparable lion similes from the Hebrew prophets were quoted at the end of the last chapter.

¹⁰⁶ *Il.* 5. 639, 7. 228, *Od.* 4. 724, al.; Tyrt. 13; 2 Sam. 17. 10 (Bogan, 96). For other Hebrew lion similes see Ps. 7. 3(2), Isa. 5. 29 f., Jer. 2. 30, Hos. 13. 7; Bogan, 95 ff.

¹⁰⁷ *Il.* 16. 156-9, cf. 4. 471 f., 11. 72 f.; Ezck. 22. 27, cf. Hab. 1. 8; Bogan, 95, 146.

¹⁰⁸ *Il.* 16. 352-7, 15. 323-6, cf. 8. 131; *Erra* V 27 f., cf. *RIAA* 1. 184. 78-80, 2. 19 iii 98, 24 vi 6 (Shalmaneser I and Tiglath-pileser I: enemy slaughtered like sheep).

Another typical image is that of the bird of prey pursuing the smaller birds and making them scatter in terror and confusion. Patroclus charges at the Lycians 'like a swift hawk, who puts the jackdaws and starlings to flight'. Later, with Aeneas and Hector leading the Trojans on,

as when a cloud of starlings or jackdaws goes
balefully screaming, when they espy approaching
a falcon, which brings death to lesser birds,
so before Aeneas and Hector the young men of the Achaeans
went balefully screaming, and fighting went out of their minds.

In the Sumerian version of Inanna's descent to the nether world Dumuzi having been promised to the underworld gods as a substitute for Inanna, flees 'like a bird in flight from a falcon's talons'. One of Sargon II's enemies fled before him 'like a partridge(?) that flees before an eagle', and Assurbanipal hunted down one of his, who had fled into the mountains, 'like a falcon'. Foes who 'flee like birds' are a commonplace in the royal inscriptions from the time of Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076) on, and we find this simile also in fragments of an epic in praise of Assurbanipal.¹⁰⁹

In a rousing speech to the Achaeans, Poseidon (disguised as Calchios) reminds them that the Trojans had previously retreated from their attack and been like fugitive deer. In the report of Sennacherib's first campaign the neologism *nāliš* 'like deer' is applied to the flight of enemy horses and troops. The leaders of Judah are said in the Lamentations of Jeremiah to have become

like deer that have found no pasture:
they have fled in their weakness before the pursuer.¹¹⁰

When the Trojans surround Odysseus in the thick of the battle, it is

as when round a boar the dogs and lusty lads
swarm, as he comes out of the deep thicket
whetting his white tusk, etc.

¹⁰⁹ Il. 16. 582 f., 17. 755-9, cf. 15. 690, 17. 460, 21. 493-5, 22. 139-44, Od. 22. 302-9; *Inanna's Descent 36'* (Jacobsen, 228; but in the version of Bottéro-Kramer, 297, the falcon is taken to stand for Dumuzi); cf. *Shulgi A 44* (Klein, 192 f.) and F. A. Ali, *Sumerian Letters: Two Collections from the Old Babylonian Schools*, Diss. Pennsylvania 1964, 93/97. 13; Thureau-Dangin, 24. 149; Streck, 82. 15; Schott, 92 f., 96 f.; K 5272 + 8466 in T. Bauer, *Das Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*, ii. 72. 15, cf. 71 obv. 16. In the *Song of Ullikummi*, 1 A iii 24, according to Güterbock's text, Kumarbi hopes that his son Ullikummi may 'scatter all the gods down from the sky like birds'; Hoffner however (53 § 12) reads it as 'like flour'.

¹¹⁰ Il. 13. 102, cf. 22. 189 (Hector like a fawn fleeing from a hound); Luckenbill, 52. 35; Lam. 1. 6 (Bogan, 100).

Again the simile is concisely paralleled in an Assurbanipal fragment: they surrounded them like (a) boar'.¹¹¹

Gradually the Achaeans are pushed back to the sea and find themselves in the gravest danger. At last Achilles is moved to action: he sends Patroclus out in command of the Myrmidons. They pour forth like a horde of wasps from a wayside nest which foolish boys have disturbed. This simile too has a parallel in seventh-century oriental literature. Micah recalls to the Israelites that they had gone against Yahweh's most recent instructions (as relayed by himself) and attacked the Amorites of the hill country. 'Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you like bees do, and beat you in Še'ir as far as Hormah.' As in the Homeric passage, the idea is of rash aggressors provoking quiescent but well-equipped opponents to a fierce counter-attack from their base.¹¹²

In another insect simile later in the same book of the *Iliad* the Achaeans and Trojans fighting furiously over the body of Sarpedon are likened to the flies that buzz round the milk-pails in springtime. If this is a simile that seems to strip the action of all dignity, it cannot but recall the one so memorably deployed in the Babylonian Flood story as it is told both in *Atrahasis* and in the Gilgamesh epic. When the waters subside and the survivor, Atrahasis or Ut-napishtim, makes his sacrifice, the starving gods catch the appetizing smell of it and 'were gathered like flies over the offering'.¹¹³

A volley of missiles is compared not to a swarm of insects but to a stinging shower from the sky.

And they from their well-built ramparts pelted them
with rocks ...

... They fell to earth like snowflakes
that the strong wind, harrying the gloomy clouds,
sheds thick and fast upon the nurturing earth.

We can trace this motif back to Sumerian epic:

From the city darts rained like rain,
and from Aratta's walls clay slingstones came clattering
as hailstones come in spring.

According to a Babylonian omen text of the mid second millennium,

¹¹¹ Il. 11. 414 ff., cf. 12. 41 ff.; K 2524 obv. 11 in Bauer, op. cit., ii. 74.

¹¹² Il. 16. 259 ff., cf. 12. 167 ff.; Deut. 1. 44. Cf. also Ps. 118. 12.

¹¹³ Il. 16. 641-4, cf. 2. 469-73; *Atr.* III v 35, *Gilg.* XI 161. Lucian also uses the simile of the gods swarming to a sacrificial offering (*De sacrific.* [30] 9): did he arrive at this independently?

If the intestines are speckled with small red granules, the enemy will make his weapons rain like the sky upon your army.

I have elsewhere quoted some lines from one of the poems celebrating campaigns of Tiglath-pileser I:

At his right Nusku was slaying all the foes,
on his left Adad was crushing the enemy.
Close behind them he was discharging a rain of missiles.

The phrase is *uṣaznan kakkē*, literally 'he was causing weaponry to rain down'.¹¹⁴

In several places Homer uses the formulaic line

ὥς οἱ μὲν μάραντο δέμας πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο.

So they fought, the very form of a blazing fire.

I have previously quoted the account of a campaign of Nebuchadnezzar I against Elam in the twelfth century:

Both kings met and made battle. Between them a conflagration blazed out.

Esarhaddon too uses the imagery of fire to describe his fierce onslaught, calling it 'a scorching flame, the Fire(-god) untiring'. And as Homer can apply the same image to an individual hero, making Menelaus say that Hector 'has the fearful force of fire, and does not cease from ravaging with his bronze', so Tiglath-pileser I had called himself 'a burning flame', 'a grand flame that is rained on the enemy land like a torrential downpour'.¹¹⁵

The fire imagery may also be developed in similes which evoke a more definite picture.

And as when ravaging fire falls upon a dense-wooded forest,
and the wind rolls it every way, and the thickets
fall root and branch under the fire's onset,
so at the hands of Agamemnon fell
the heads of fleeing Trojans.

As fire burns the forest, and as flame scorches the mountains,
so pursue them with thy gale, and with thy hurricane terrify them.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *JH* 12, 154-8 cf. 278-87; *Lugalbanda* 256-8 (Jacobsen, 336); J. Nougayrol, *RA* 65, 1971, 73, 29; *LKA* 63 rev. 11 (V. Hurowitz and J. G. Westenholz, *JCS* 42, 1990, 4; Foster, 237).

¹¹⁵ *JH* 11, 596, al.; above, p. 213; Borger, 97, 14; *JH* 17, 565, cf. 15, 605, 20, 371; *RIMA* 2, 13, 42 f.

¹¹⁶ *JH* 11, 155-9, cf. 13, 39, 17, 737-9; Ps. 83, 15(14) f.; Bogan, 101 f.

When Patroclus is killed and his body brought back, Achilles grieves over him, groaning like a lion whose cubs have been stolen. In another passage his grief is represented as being like that of a father for his son. Both of these comparisons appear in the episode where Gilgamesh laments for Enkidu. They will need to be discussed in connection with the question of a special relationship between the *Iliad* and the Gilgamesh epic, and I shall consider them more fully in chapter 7.

The physical pain of the wounded Agamemnon, which forces him to withdraw from the fighting, is likened to the sharp pangs of a woman in the throes of childbirth. According to the latest commentator, 'the image of the woman in labour is a unique and memorable simile which, coming at this point, is eloquent testimony to the range and humanity of the poet's imagination'. It may be unique in early Greek poetry, but in Hebrew, by the eighth century, it was a cliché. The psalmists and prophets do not have occasion to describe physical pain such as that caused by a spear-cut, but they apply the simile to spiritual anguish. In one case it drives kings from a battlefield:

For see, the kings were assembled,
they had come through (the land) together;
when they saw, they were transfixed, they fled in panic.
Trembling seized them there,
travail as (of) a woman giving birth.¹¹⁷

In the *Odyssey*, when Telemachus and his friend Pisistratus enter Menelaus' palace, which gleams with bronze, gold, electrum, silver, and ivory, they are filled with admiration: its splendour is 'like that of the sun or the moon'. The same words are later applied to Alcinous' palace. They recall the language used by Neo-Assyrian and late Babylonian kings about temples and other structures that they have restored and embellished. Esarhaddon, Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonidus all made temples 'shine like the sun' or 'like the radiance of the sun'.

Ekua, the sanctum of Marduk lord of the gods, I made its surface shine like the sun; I clad the house with red gold as if it were plaster, and with lapis lazuli and alabaster.

I clad the walls with silver and gold and made it shine like the sun

¹¹⁷ *JH* 11, 269-72; Ps. 48, 5(4)-7(6); cf. Mic. 4, 9 f., Isa. 13, 8, 21, 3, 26, 17, Jer. 6, 24 (Bogan, 105; Krenkel, 28).

Nabonidus also caused the city of Harran to shine 'as if the moon had risen'.¹¹⁸

When the elderly ladies of Troy supplicate Athena, Hecuba selects an offering for the goddess an embroidered robe made by Phoenician women, the largest and finest in her clothes-chest, and it 'shone like a star'. This unexpected simile is repeated and developed in the *Odyssey*, whose poet first closely copies the *Iliad* passage in book 15 and later speaks of other garments that were 'as bright as the sun' or 'like the sun or the moon'. The *Iliad* passage, in which the garment concerned is adornment for a goddess, may be put beside lines from a somewhat earlier Babylonian poem in which Marduk's (statue's) dress, the adornment of his lordship, is described as 'full of splendour like the stars of heaven'.¹¹⁹

Perhaps the most memorable star similes in Homer are the two applied to Achilles in book 22. The bronze on his chest shines like Sirius —brightest of the fixed stars, but a baleful portent for mankind. And three hundred lines later the light from his spear shines like the Evening Star, the loveliest in the sky. This time we may compare Assurbanipal's hymn to Ishtar of Nineveh:

The crown on her head g[leams] like a star (or: like stars);
the discs on her breast blaze like the sun.¹²⁰

To admit that this conventional Assyrian imagery may be relevant to the provenance of the Homeric similes need not lessen our admiration for what the Greek poet has made of them in the climactic episode of his epic.

METAPHORS

In dealing with lion similes it was appropriate to mention the image of the 'heart of a lion', especially as in the Hebrew parallel quoted it appears in the syntactic form of a simile. In another figurative expression used of someone unyielding or unfeeling, his or her heart (θυμός, ἦτορ, or καρδίη) is said to be of some very hard substance, iron, bronze, or adamant. Telemachus tells his mother that her heart is 'harder than a stone'. Again parallels are to be found in the Old Testament.

¹¹⁸ *Od.* 4. 45 (cf. 71–5) = 7. 84 (cf. 86–94); *Borger*, 5. 19 f., 84. 38; *Langdon*, 68. 30, 124. 43 ff., 134 vii 5 f., 222. 13, 24 f. In a related image which goes back as far as Tiglath-pileser I, temple walls are made to gleam like the stars (Schott, 109).

¹¹⁹ *Il.* 6. 295, *Od.* 15. 108, 19. 234, 24. 148, cf. *Atcm.* 1. 61–3(?); *Erra* I 127.

¹²⁰ *Il.* 22. 26–32, 317–19; *CPLM* no. 7 obv. 7 f.

Zechariah, speaking of those who refused to listen to God's word, says they made their heart *šāmîr*; the word denotes some hard, sharp-edged substance, and is variously translated 'adamant', 'flint', or 'emery'. Of *Levithan* it is said that 'his heart is set hard like a stone'.¹²¹

Homer has an adjective ἀνεμώλιος, 'windy', which is used only in the sense of 'vain, empty, insubstantial', and applied to an ineffectual bow, to useless helpers, and especially to empty, unreliable words in the phrase ἀνεμώλια βάζειν, 'speak windy things'. Neither the word nor the metaphor is current in Classical Greek, but there are good Semitic parallels. In Akkadian *šāru*, the ordinary word for 'wind', may be used as a metaphor for the vain and insubstantial. According to some famous lines from the Old Babylonian version of the *Gilgamesh* epic,

but as for man, his days are numbered;
all his activity is just wind.

The word is often applied to false words, empty slander, etc. Similarly in Hebrew: 'if a man goes about (and) falsely utters wind (*rûaḥ*) and lies'; 'Is there a limit to words of wind?' Mankind is but flesh, and 'a wind that goes and does not return'. 'The prophets will become wind.' There is also a word *hēbel*, 'breath (of wind)', which is mostly used in the metaphorical sense of vanity, futility, and transience.¹²²

Another metaphor that is common to the Greek and Hebrew poetic languages is that by which someone may be called a 'light' for others, that is, a beacon of hope, salvation, etc. Seeing Teucer pick off one Trojan after another with his arrows, Agamemnon is delighted and says, 'Yes, keep shooting like this, see if you can become a light to the Danaans, and to your father Telamon'. In a parallel sense Yahweh says to Deutero-Isaiah, 'I will give you for a light of (the) nations, so that my salvation may be to the end of the earth'.¹²³

The words βίος and βίωτος, 'life', are quite often used to signify 'the means of life, livelihood, sustenance'. In a number of passages, especially in Hesiod, they refer specifically and exclusively to grain: he speaks several times of having it in one's granary, or putting it in or taking it out from there, and after giving us directions on threshing our corn and scooping the grain up into jars, he continues 'but when you

¹²¹ *Il.* 2. 490, 22. 357, 24. 205, 521, *Od.* 4. 293, 5. 191, 23. 172, *Hes. Th.* 239, 764, *Op.* 147, *Pind. fr.* 123. 4 f.; *Od.* 23. 103; *Zech.* 7. 12, *Job* 41. 16(24); *Brown*, 314. Cf. also *Isa.* 48. 4 (*Bogan*, 212 f., 432).

¹²² *Il.* 4. 355, 5. 216, 20. 123, *al.*; *Gilg.* OBV Yale fr. iv 6 f., cf. the 'Ballade des héros du temps jadis' 3; *AHw* s.v. *šāru* I 7, *CAD* s.v. *šāru* A 5; *Mic.* 2. 11, *Job* 16. 3, cf. 8. 2, 15. 2; *Ps.* 78. 39; *Jer.* 5. 11 (*Dogan*, 196).

¹²³ *Il.* 8. 282, cf. 11. 796, 16. 39, 17. 615, 18. 102, *Pind. Pyth.* 3. 75, *Isth.* 2. 17, *Aesch. Cho.* 131; *Isa.* 49. 6, cf. 42. 6, 51. 4.

have stored all the βίος away inside your house, ...'.¹²⁴ In Akkadian the word 'life', *napištu*, is used in a similar way. As in Greek an indigent may be said to 'have no "life"', so in Old Babylonian texts we find expressions like *napištam ul išū*, 'they have no "life"', that is, no means of sustenance.¹²⁵

After lighting Patroclus' funeral pyre Achilles addresses his friend in Hades and declares that he is carrying out everything that he had promised. He has slaughtered twelve young Trojans, and 'the fire is eating them (ἐσθίει) together with you'. This is the only place in Homer where fire is said to 'eat' things, but we may also cite a riddle in the pseudo-Hesiodic *Wedding of Ceyx* in which something was said to eat its father and mother; the solution was fire, which devours the wood from which it is kindled.¹²⁶ Though unusual in Greek, the metaphor is common in Akkadian and Hebrew, where the ordinary word for 'eat' (*akalu*, *ʾākal*) is regularly used of fire.

In three passages of the *Odyssey* the poet uses the phrase ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος, 'at the head of the harbour'. There seems to be no parallel or close analogy in early Greek uses of words meaning 'head'. In Hebrew, on the other hand, *rō ʾš* 'head' is much more freely applied to topographical features, such as the top of a hill, crag, or tower, or the entrance to a street. In Akkadian *qaqqadu* 'head' may be used of the 'top' of a field or of the city (meaning the highest point of the city wall).¹²⁷

FIGURES OF SPEECH

Under this heading I analyse certain types of syntactic mannerism or special formal patterning imposed on the expression of the sense. Here again investigation reveals some notable parallels between devices used by early Greek poets and those to be found in the West Asiatic literatures

Anaphora

Anaphora is such a commonplace figure of speech, at home in many, possibly all languages, that there is little point in dwelling on it here. I

¹²⁴ Hes. *Op.* 600 f., cf. 31, 301, 307, 476.

¹²⁵ Hes. *Th.* 605, *Op.* 31, 499, 501, 634; *CAD* s.v. *napištu* 8.

¹²⁶ *Il.* 23. 182 (a papyrus variant replaces the vivid ἐσθίει by the commonplace ἀμφέπει, 'is active around'); Hes. fr. 267 (cf. R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, *Rh. Mus.* 108, 1965, 311–13).

¹²⁷ *Od.* 9. 140, 13. 102, 346; *Nah.* 3. 10, *Lam.* 2. 19, al., 'at the head of every street'; *CAD* s.v. *qaqqadu* 4c

will just mention in passing a couple of examples where particular verbs are employed in anaphora both in Greek and in Semitic poetry. One is the verb 'know'. In half a dozen places in early Greek epic we find 'I know' or 'we know' repeated at the beginning of parallel sentences, with different objects. For example, the Sirens sing

ἴδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ' ὅσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃσι εὐρείῃσι
'Αργεῖοι Τρῶές τε θεῶν ἰότητι μάγησαν.
ἴδμεν δ' ὅσσα γένηται ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ.

For we know all that in Troy's broad land
the Argives and Trojans suffered by the gods' will,
and we know all that happens on the nurturing earth.

In a short Middle Babylonian version of the Flood story on a tablet found at Ugarit, Atramhasis says

īde milka ša ilī rabbūti,
īde māmēšunu u ul ipattū ana yāši.

I knew the counsel of the great gods,
I knew their conspiracy, though they did not reveal it to me.¹²⁸

The other case is anaphora of 'there came'. Nestor gives orders for a sacrifice, and everyone bustles to:

ἦλθε μὲν ὄρ βοῦς
ἐκ πεδίου, ἦλθον δὲ θοῆς παρὰ νηὸς εἵσης
Τηλεμάχου ἔταροι μεγαλήτορος, ἦλθε δὲ χαλκεύς
· ἦλθε δ' Ἀθήνη.

There came the ox
from the plain, there came from the swift ship
great-hearted Telemachus' comrades, there came the smith
... There came Athena.

In the Baal epic we have

āḥr mgy āliyn B'ī,
mgyt btl 'nt.

After that there came victorious Baal,
there came the maiden 'Anat.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *Od.* 12. 189–91, cf. Hes. *Th.* 27 f., *Il.* 7. 237–41, 20. 201–3, 432–4, *Hymn. Dem.* 229 f.; J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica* v. 302. 9 f. (Lambert–Millard, 131–3; Foster, 185).

¹²⁹ *Od.* 3. 430–5; *KTU* 1. 4 iii 23 f.

Epanalepsis

More remarkable, perhaps, is a device which occurs three times towards the end of the *Iliad*, whereby the second half of one verse is repeated at the first half of the next. This is the figure known as epanalepsis.

But I will go to face him, even if his hands are like fire,
if his hands are like fire, and his fury like burnished iron.

To cosy-talk him, the way a girl and a youth,
a girl and a youth cosy-talk each other.

He steered the chariot firmly on,
steered the chariot firmly on, while his twin urged with the goad.¹³⁰

Only in the last instance can the repetition be said to have any obvious suitability to the sense.

The same phenomenon is found in Semitic poetry. There are several Ugaritic examples, of which this one is typical:

*l̥b Hdd, l̥m ṭṣṣ,
l̥m ṭṣṣ n̥tq Dmm?*

Foes of Hadad, why are you dismayed,
why are you dismayed at the weapons of Demaron?

Another instance may be quoted from what is generally regarded as one of the oldest (if not the oldest) of surviving Hebrew poems, the Song of Deborah:

*kī lō 'bā 'ū l' 'ezrat Yahweh,
l' 'ezrat Yahweh baggibbôrîm.*

Because they did not come to the help of Yahweh,
to the help of Yahweh against the warrior-heroes.

And a further one from Akkadian:

*"Atû, mē, petâ bâbka,
petâ bâbkama lûruba anâku."*

'Ho there, porter, open your gate,
open your gate, I want to come in.'¹³¹

¹³⁰ *Il.* 20. 371 f., 22. 127 f., 23. 641 f.

¹³¹ *KTU* 1. 4 vii 38 f., cf. 2 iv 12 f., 10 ii 22 f., 27-9, iii 30 f. (Caquot-Sznycer, 284 f., 289); *Jdg.* 5. 23. cf. *Ps.* 37. 40, 94. 23, 96. 13, 98. 5; *Descent of Ishtar* 14 f. Cf. S. E. Loewenstamm, *JSS* 14, 1969, 176-96; Y. Avishur, *UF* 4, 1972, 1-10; C. F. Whitley, *UF* 7, 1975, 501 f.; W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, Sheffield 1984, 208-13.

We may fairly say that the figure is at home in Semitic verse: it is one of the formal procedures by which the poet achieves equilibrium between paired cola. In Greek verse it has no such functional role. Outside the *Iliad* it does not reappear before the Alexandrian age.

A milder form of epanalepsis occurs when a noun or name from the first line is repeated at the beginning of the second in order to have a relative clause hung on it, as in

*'Ανδρομάχη, θυγάτηρ μεγάλητορος Ἡετίωνος,
Ἡετίων, ὃς ἐναίειν ὑπὸ Πλάκῳ ὕλησσι.*

Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eetion,
Eetion, who dwelt below wooded Plakos.

We find exactly the same thing in Akkadian:

*u Anun tamšilašu ulid Nudimmud,
Nudimmud, ša abbīšu šālissunu šūma.*

Anu in turn bore in his own likeness Nudimmud,
Nudimmud, who was his fathers' superior.¹³²

Rhetorical questions

I do not intend to consider the rhetorical question in general, but only certain particular questions which appear in Greek poetry and are paralleled in the Near East. An especially common one is 'Till when,?' An unsatisfactory or disagreeable situation prevails, and someone asks how long it is to continue. Ares, in the guise of the Thracian leader Aenmas, comes to the sons of Priam and demands, 'How much longer will you allow the army to be killed by the Achaeans?' Thetis asks Achilles, 'My child, how long are you going to go on lamenting and grieving and eating your heart out?' Callinus, endeavouring to rouse his countrymen to awareness of the threat of war, cries

How long will you lie idle? When will you young men
take courage?

In the same spirit Joshua said to the people of Israel:

How long will you be (too) idle to go in and take over the land which Yahweh the god of your fathers has given you?

There are numerous biblical examples. Many of those in the Psalms are appeals to God of the type 'How long, O Lord? Wilt thou forget me for

¹³² *Il.* 6. 395 f., cf. 2. 672 f., 21. 85 f., *Od.* 1. 22 f., *Hes Op.* 317 f., 579 f., *En. el.* 116 f.

ever?' It is a type paralleled in Babylonian prayers and 'psalms', for instance:

How long, my mistress, will you be angry and your face averted?

How long, O lord of Nippur? Help me!

How long, O lord, how long will a mighty foe control your land?

Similarly in the Nebuchadnezzar I epic the king is represented as entreating Marduk and asking him, 'How long, lord of Babylon, will you dwell in the enemy's land?'¹³³ In all these examples the expression meaning 'how long' is literally 'till when' or 'till what point' (Heb. *'ad mātay* or *'ad-ʾān(āh)*, Akk. *adi mati*), corresponding closely to the Greek ἐς τί or τέο μέχρις.

There is a Homeric idiom equivalent to 'perhaps', consisting of the rhetorical question τίς δ' οἶδ', εἰ κε ..., 'who knows whether ...?' For example, Nestor suggests to Patroclus that he remind Achilles of their fathers' admonitions before they set out for Troy:

Who knows whether with God's favour you might move his heart?

We find exactly the same thing in Hebrew:

While the boy was alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows (whether) Yahweh will favour me and the boy will live?'¹³⁴

In Ugaritic the words 'who knows' (*mn yd ʿ*) appear to have coalesced to make *mnd ʿ* 'perhaps', and likewise Akkadian *manda*, *minde*, from *man ide* 'who knows?' or *min ide* 'what do I know?'

The most dramatic of rhetorical questions is 'What is life (to me)?', implying that the speaker considers it of no further value. Mimnermus asks 'What life, what pleasure (is there), without golden Aphrodite?' This is abstract reflection, but characters in tragedy often express their personal misery, or misery anticipated from the loss of a loved one, in rhetorical questions such as 'Why then should I live?' Medea, for example, because Jason has taken a new wife, asks τί δέ μοι ζῆν ἐτι κέρδος; 'What profit remains for me in living?' Her posture is the same, if not for the same reasons, as that of Jacob's mother Rebecca, who said to her husband Isaac:

¹³³ *Il.* 5. 465, 24. 128, *Callin.* 1. 1; *Josh.* 18. 3, cf. *Exod.* 16. 28, *Num.* 14. 11, 26, 1 *Sam.* 1. 14, 16. 1, 1 *Ki.* 18. 21, *Ps.* 4. 2, 13. 1, 35. 17, 62. 4, 79. 5, 80. 4, 82. 2, 89. 46, 94. 3, etc.; Ebeling (1953), 134. 93 (*ANET* 384; Seux, 193; Foster, 513); Maul, 90 (Seux, 147; Foster, 566); Nebuchadnezzar epic, 8.

¹³⁴ *Il.* 11. 791, cf. 15. 403, 16. 860, *Od.* 2. 332, 3. 216; 2 *Sam.* 12. 22, cf. *Joel* 2. 14, *Jon.* 3. 9, *Esth.* 4. 14; Bogan, 113, 139.

If Jacob takes a wife from the Hittite women such as these, {from the women of the land,} what point is there for me in life?¹³⁵

'There is a city called ...'

Although it is not really a figure of speech, we may notice here a device used to launch a narrative, or to make a scene-change within a narrative. The location of the action is first specified by means of a statement in the form 'There is a city X, situated ...' (with some brief geographical indication such as the name of a river). The narrator then goes on to say who lived there or what happened there. There are several examples in Homer, especially in tales related by one of the heroes, for instance:

There is a city Ephyra in a nook of horse-pasturing Argos,
and there Sisyphus dwelt, the most cunning of men.

There is a certain city Thryoessa, a steep hill,
far off by the Alpheus.

We find just the same device employed by Ut-napishtim to begin his narrative of the Flood in the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh epic:

Shuruppak (is) a city, which you yourself know,
[which] is situated [on the bank] of the Euphrates.

Another example occurs in the Hittite story of Appu:

(There is) a city, its name (is) Sudul, and it is in the land of Lulluwa on the sea coast. Up there lived a man named Appu.¹³⁶

III: n + 1

The Ugaritic verses quoted some pages back, 'seven years were completed, eight revolutions of time', illustrate a stylistic device common in that corpus, by which a numeral in the first clause is increased by one in the parallel member. In another passage, for instance, we read

Indeed two sacrifices Baal hates,
three the Rider of the Clouds.

Examples are frequent in the other Semitic traditions too. In the Akkadian disputation between the tamarisk and the palm, the latter

¹³⁵ *Mimn.* 1. 1, *Soph. Aj.* 393, *Ant.* 548, 566, *Eur. Med.* 145, etc.; *Gen.* 27. 46, which Bogan (171, 318) cited as a parallel for *Il.* 18. 80 ff. and *Od.* 24. 435.

¹³⁶ *Il.* 6. 152 f., 11. 711 f., cf. 2. 811, *Od.* 13. 96, 19. 172/178 f.; *Gilg.* XI 11 f., cf. the Akkadian Flood story fragment in *Ugaritica* v. 302, i 4; Siegelová, 4 (Hoffner, 63 § 2).

boasts, 'I am above you; sixfold I surpass you, seven times [...]'. A seventh-century Phoenician-Aramaic incantation from Arslan Tash in Upper Syria refers to 'oaths by the wife of Horon ... and her seven co-wives, by the eight wives of holy Baal': here the eight wives have initially been divided into one plus seven for the sake of the seven-eight progression. Amos has the Lord saying in a series of pronouncements, 'For three transgressions of Damascus (Gaza, Tyre, Edom, etc.) and for four, I will not recall the punishment.' And according to the Book of Proverbs, 'there are six things which Yahweh hates, seven which are an abomination to him'. Even outside poetic parallelism, we find the idiom in such phrases as 'God does all this twice, three (times), with a man', 'until the third and until the fourth generation', 'as Yehudi read three columns and four'.¹³⁷

It is not easy to find anything of the sort in Greek. However, occasional verses in early epic may perhaps be seen as echoing the Semitic idiom

Twice and thrice perhaps you will get what you want.

But we Achaeans will repay you threefold and fourfold, if ...

As loud as nine thousand shout or ten thousand.

Thrice blessed son of Aeacus, and four times fortunate Peleus!

When Achilles claims

Twelve cities of men I have sacked with my ships,
eleven on foot in the Trojans' fertile land,

this would look very like an Ugaritic couplet if only the numbers were reversed; and it is conceivable that they have been reversed, in order to fit in the connecting particle which Greek idiom so strongly favours.¹³⁸

This is perhaps the best place to notice another conformation of phrases that involves a pair of terms, the second of which represents an advance over the first. It is a convention of Greek epic that when someone is doing or holding different things in each hand, the left hand is mentioned before the right: 'with his left hand ... while with his right

¹³⁷ KTU 1. 4 iii 17 f., cf. 3 v 11 f., 25-7, 4 vii 9-12, BWL 160. 18; KAI 27. 15 ff. (SSJ iii. 83 no. 23 authenticity disputed); Amos 1. 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 2. 1, 4, 6, Prov. 6. 16, cf. 30. 15, 18, 21, 29, Job 5. 19 Ps. 62. 12(11), etc.; Job 33. 29, Exod. 20. 5, Jer. 36. 23. The material is collected by W. M. W. Roth, *Vetus Testamentum* 12, 1962, 300-11; further bibliography in S. M. Paul, *Amos*, Minneapolis 1991, 27 n. 168.

¹³⁸ Hes. *Op.* 401 ff. 1. 128. 5. 860 (= 14. 148), 'Hes.' fr. 211; ff. 9. 328 f.; cf. KTU 1. 4 vii 9 f., 'six and sixty cities he seized, seventy-seven towns'.

Similarly in Ugaritic poetry, except that there the first hand is not specified as the left:

He seized his [l]ance in his hand,
his [g]orge(?) in his right hand.

The pattern was taken over from Canaanite into Hebrew poetry, as in the Song of Deborah:

She set her hand to the tent-peg,
and her right hand to the workmen's hammer.¹³⁹

EXCLAMATIONS

The Greek poet who portrays people in distress has a considerable range of cries of woe that he can put into their mouths, as the translator of a tragedy finds to his embarrassment: his petty stock of Ohs and Ahs and Aluses is soon overdrawn. A number of these interjections, however, such as αἰῶ, ἦ, ἰῶ, ὦ, οἰῶ, ὀροῶ, appear to be restricted to high poetry. We do not find them in comedy, unless the tragic tone is being parodied, and the inference is that they are not representations of vociferations heard in real life but items in a conventional poetic vocabulary. What, then, is their origin? Are they archaic cries that had once been current in Greece but had gone out of fashion? Are they entirely artificial and literary in character?

It is sometimes thought that such interjections have no etymology but are 'elementary', nothing but natural groans and yelps extorted from the human frame by the spasm of emotion and transcribed by mimetic art.¹⁴⁰ But the fact is that, even before any transcription, we use our vocal organs to impose a conventional shape upon most of our 'involuntary' exclamations. Even such a basic reflex as laughter can acquire horribly different phonologies among different social groups. The English child learns at a young age to shout 'ow' or 'ouch' when hurt; this obviously corresponds to the German child's 'au', 'aua', 'autsch', whereas in Latin *au* is an expression of female consternation, and in Greek it is a dog's

¹³⁹ ff. 1. 501, 21. 490, al.; see W. Bühler's note on Moschus, *Europa* 126 and mine on Hes. *Th.* 179, KTU 1. 16 i 47 f., cf. 41 f., 2 i 39; Jdg. 5. 26, cf. Isa. 48. 13. The formula is not used in a consistent way in Ugaritic: sometimes 'in his right hand' is simply a variation of 'in his hand' in the parallel verse.

¹⁴⁰ So e.g. W. Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, *Hebräische Grammatik*, 28th ed., Leipzig 1909, 317. 'Unter den Interjektionen sind etliche (wie in allen anderen Sprachen) reine Naturlaute, gleichsam laugeberden, die durch irgend welche Eindrücke oder Empfindungen unwillkürlich hervorgerufen werden.'

bark. In the Oxford English and Latin Dictionaries 'ow' and 'au' respectively are explained as 'natural' sounds, but it is evident that any natural element has been boxed and tagged by local convention. It is possible in some cases to follow interjections for a distance through the branches of the Indo-European tree.¹⁴¹ But horizontal influence between neighbour languages may have been as important as ancient inheritance. Latin borrowed *babae* and a few others from Greek, and *haue* from Punic. It is therefore entirely possible in principle that some Greek interjections should show correspondences with Semitic ones, whether because they came into Greek from a Semitic language or because both derived them from an East Mediterranean substrate. And as certain Greek interjections such as *euhoē* and *io* appear in Latin only at the literary level, mainly reflecting cult usage, it is possible that some which are found only at the literary level in Greek may have a similar status in relation to an oriental language. The following comparisons are offered with this in mind.

Let us begin with *ai ai* (αἰ αἰ), an expression of grief very common in tragedy but not found in epic. It is a doubling of *ai*, which is occasionally found in other combinations, as presumably in *ailinon*. It may be that it goes back to an earlier **wai*, which could be the source of the Latin *uae*. In any case we can put it beside Akkadian *ai*, *ayyi*, *aial* (Old Babylonian *wai*), Arabic *way*, and Hittite *ai*, *wai*, *wi*, all meaning 'woe.' In Akkadian initial *w* disappeared after the Old Babylonian period, as it was to do later in Greek. In West Semitic it changed to *y*, and the Ugaritic interjection written as *y* was perhaps *yē*, the predicted outcome of **wai* in that language. This Canaanite form might then be the source of the exotic lament *iē* (יֵה) which appears a few times in Aeschylus' lyrics.

The word *ailinon* or *ailinos*, used poetically for a lament or dirge, was traditionally understood to be from *ai Linon* 'alas for Linus', Linus being apparently a periodically dying nature-figure of 'Aegean' type. One sometimes sees canvassed a derivation from a West Semitic **'al lānu* = Hebrew *'ōy lānū*, 'alas for us!' But the dissimilar vowel in the second syllable is awkward, and in a cult lament one might expect the focus to be on the god. There was in fact in the north-west Semitic area in the third and second millennia a god called Lim; nothing is known of his nature, but it has been suggested that if the name is Semitic, it may be related to the Assyrian *limu* or *limmu*, the title of an official appointed

annually by lot with the main function of having the year named after him. If so, it is conceivable that Lim was some sort of year-deity, and that *ailinon* goes back to **(w)ai Lim*, 'alas for Lim!' From a parallel **yē Lim* we could account for another exotic word for a lament in Greek tragedy, *iēlemos*.¹⁴² This is, of course, more than usually speculative.

The regular Homeric exclamation of woe is *ōi moi* (ὦ μοι).¹⁴³ Whether it is written as one word or as two is immaterial; it is in any case the combination of an interjection *ōi* with the dative pronoun *moi* 'for me' (as in the Latin *uae mihi*). We find a very similar interjection in the Akkadian *ū 'i*, *ūy*, and the Hebrew *'ōy*, 'woe!' The latter is usually followed by a dative pronoun, especially the first person singular or plural, *'ōy lī* 'woe to me!', which is completely parallel to the Greek *ōi moi*, or *'ōy lānū* 'woe to us!' There is another form with initial *hē* instead of *aleph*, *hōi*, used in laments. We gather from Jeremiah that a dead king might be lamented with the cry *hōy 'ādōn*, 'Alas, lord!' This is strikingly reminiscent of the ritual cry in the Greek Adonis cult, *ō(i) ton Adōnin*.¹⁴⁴

Aeschylus' Persian elders sing of their fear that before long the great city of Susa may resound with the wail *ōā Persikou strategou*, 'ōā for the Persian army!' Later on they use this exclamation *ōā* themselves. It does not occur in Greek outside this play, and Aeschylus evidently thought it a realistic representation of an exotic oriental cry of woe. We may compare it with the Akkadian form *ū 'a* (also Sumerian *ú-a*), especially as we find this combined in a similar way with a noun: *ū 'a nišiya, ša Erra aggušināti*, 'Alas for my people, against whom Erra is raging!' *ū 'a Bābili*, 'Alas for Babylon!'¹⁴⁵

In a Neo-Babylonian medical work the groans of a terminally ill patient are represented as *yu-ū-yu-ū*, that is, phonetically, *yū yū*.¹⁴⁶ This resembles the Greek *ιὺ ιὺ* and *ιοὺ ιοὺ*, which first appear in tragedy. They have more than one function, but *ιὺ* is often used to express grief

¹⁴² Or *iālemos*; but the form with *iē-* is preferred even in lyrics. Aeschylus associates it with the interjection *iē* (Supp. 114 f.) and with oriental wailing women (Cho. 424). On Lim see M. Kienast in *RIA* vii. 25-7.

¹⁴³ Often written *ōi* in manuscripts and editions, but the iota after the omega is attested by ancient inscriptional, papyrus, and grammatical evidence and written in the best manuscript of Aeschylus and Sophocles in several places: see my *Aeschyli Tragoediae*, Stuttgart 1990, liii, adding *high Aj. 227, 367, O.C. 820*. The later form *ōi* is presumably derived from it by shortening of the long diphthong.

¹⁴⁴ Jer. 22. 18; Sappho 168. On Adonis-'ādōn cf. p. 57.

¹⁴⁵ Aesch. Pers. 116, 122, 570, 573, 578, 581; *AHW* 23b, 1398a; F. Delitzsch, *Sumerisches Literatur*, Leipzig 1914, 40; *Erra III* 30, IV 40-4.

¹⁴⁶ R. Labat, *Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux*, Paris & Leiden 1951, 150.

¹⁴¹ Cf. E. Schwentner, *Die primären Interjektionen in den indogermanischen Sprachen*, Heidelberg 1924, and other literature cited in E. Schwyzler and A. Debrunner, *Griechische Grammatik II*, Munich 1950, 599 n. 1, 600 n. 1.

or suffering—in Euripides it is sometimes the cry of persons in the process of being murdered—and *ἰὸς*, which occurs also in comedy and prose, is associated especially with sudden realizations, whether painful or joyful.

There was a Sumerian and Akkadian exclamation of joy *alala* or *alali*, 'Hurrah!' Derived from it is an Akkadian noun *alālu* which denotes a ritual song or cry of joyful character, sung by peasants in the fields and evidently incorporating the exclamation, and a verb of the same form meaning to sing a song of joy or triumph. Perhaps related to this is the Hebrew *hālāl* 'rave insanely', *hillēl* 'praise, celebrate'; performing a joyful traditional vintage-song is 'making *hillūlim*' (Jdg. 9, 27). In Greek we have the cry *alalai* in two Aristophanic victory-songs and, of more frequent occurrence, the derived nouns *alalā*, *alalagē*, *alalagmos*, and the verb *alalazō*. Sometimes the reference is to war-cries, sometimes to joyful cries for a victory or a wedding, sometimes to the wild cries of Bacchic or other orgiastic-religious revelry.¹⁴⁷

Another interjection which first appears in Greek in the fifth century is *ēn* (ἐν) 'look, behold'. Beside it we may set Ugaritic *hn*, Hebrew *hinneh* and *hēn*, with the same meaning. Each typically stands at the beginning of a sentence, the next words making explicit that to which attention is being drawn. The Latin *ēn* may well be a borrowing from the Greek, and cannot be used as evidence for an Indo-European origin.

HYMNS AND PRAYERS

Finally we will consider a series of formulae and modes of expression that are characteristic of hymns and prayers. Because it is difficult to draw clear lines between (a) the expression of particular convictions about the gods, (b) the adoption of given procedures for the composition of a hymn or prayer, and (c) the use of given forms of words, some of this material might have been accommodated in the last chapter or the one before. But it will stand well enough as the conclusion of this one.

Hymnic idioms

The most typical element in a hymn is celebration of the extent of the god's power. Certain particular ways of expressing this are common to Greek and Semitic poetry.

Firstly, it may be stated that the deity in question has power both in heaven and on earth, or in heaven, sea, and earth. The motif seems to be

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Pind. fr. 70b.13 (associated with madness), Aesch. fr. 57. 7, Eur. *Bacch.* 593, 1133; in connection with the Magna Mater, id. *Hel.* 1344, 1352.

especially associated with goddesses. Hesiod says of Hecate that Zeus honoured her above all others,

and he gave her a glorious bounty,
a share both of the earth and of the bottomless sea;
but from the starry heaven too she has a portion of honour.

Of Aphrodite we hear in the Homeric Hymn that

she overpowers the races of mortal men,
and the birds that fly in heaven, and every creature,
both all that the land breeds, and all that the sea.

And when Artemis goes a-hunting, not only do the mountain-tops tremble and the woods resound, but 'earth shivers, and the fishy sea'.¹⁴⁸

This concept of the cosmic extent of a goddess's power can already be seen in Sumerian hymns to Inanna, where, for example, she declares:

When I raise my hand, it encompasses the heaven.
I am the queen: my hand has no hand to rival it.
When I lift my foot, it encompasses the earth.
I am the queen: my foot has no foot to rival it.

In an Old Babylonian fragment Ishtar proclaims:

I make heaven and earth shake(?) with my cries ...
[the queen of heaven and earth am I, Ishtar ...
[I constantly traverse heaven, (and?) the earth for evermore.

The healing goddess Gula, in a hymn of the late second or early first millennium, says, 'Great is my star in heaven, my name in the underworld', and again, 'I am sublime in heaven, I am queen in the underworld'. She makes similar claims for her husband Ninurta. In the great Shamash hymn we read how the god traverses heaven and earth, governs the lower and the upper worlds, crosses the sea too and shines into the deep. Further passages from Akkadian hymns could be cited. In the Old Testament we may recall especially the eighty-ninth Psalm:

Thou art the ruler of the towering sea ...
thine are the heavens, thine too the earth.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Hes. *Th.* 412–14, cf. 427, *Hymn Aphr.* 3–5, *Hymn. Hom.* 27, 8 f.

¹⁴⁹ P. Haupt, *Akkadische und sumerische Keilschrifttexte*, Leipzig 1881, 127 f. (trs. for me by Dr. J. A. Black); H. Zimmern, *Berichte der Königlich-sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig*, Phil.-hist. Kl. 68, 1916, 43 (Falkenstein-von Soden, 239 f.; Foster, 74); Gula hymn of Bullutsa-rabi, ed. W. G. Lambert, *Or. N.S.* 36, 1967, 105–32 (Foster, 491–9), lines 5, 94, cf. 46–8, 74 f., 133 f., 148; Shamash hymn, *BWL* 126–8, lines 27–38; Ps. 89, 10(9) + 12(11). Most of the above passages are adduced in the article by E. G. Schmidt cited above, p. 137 n. 160.

Sometimes it is emphasized that the deity who is the subject of the hymn received his or her powers and privileges from the king of the gods, implying that they are absolutely legitimate and guaranteed. The lines quoted above from Hesiod about Hecate provide one example of this motif. There are others in the Homeric Hymns. Hestia swore eternal virginity by the head of Zeus, and in compensation for what she had denied herself he bestowed on her the honours that she has. Apollo has received his power of prophecy as a gift from Zeus. Hermes has been granted by Zeus the patronage of thieving. Jumping back to the Old Babylonian period, we find in the hymn to Nanaya composed for Samsuiluna the lines:

A love-spreading heart her father gave her in great measure;
as she rose up, he put love charms round her neck.
From all the goddesses the lion Anu,
her begetter, raised up her head.
She is uniquely grand and honoured;
he appointed exuberance for her, festivity (and) rejoicing.
He came up to her, words of joy
he spoke unto her, he brightened her heart:
'You are the mistress of (all) settled communities;
the people look towards your light like (that of) the sun.'

In a hymn to Marduk of the later second millennium, the god is assured that

Anu who dwells in heaven made you great;
the father of the gods, Nunamnir (= Enlil), pronounced your name;
Ea in the *apsû* granted you wisdom;
Ninmenna the creatress set glory about [you].

Similarly in hymns to other gods:

Enlil your father has given you (Ninurta)
the command over all the gods, it is held in your hand.
Enlil your father has given you (Nergal)
the Black-headed ones (= mankind), all living things;
animals (and) beasts he has entrusted to your hand.

Further examples could be quoted.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Hes. *Th.* 411–13 cf. 423–8, 450; *Hymn. Aphr.* 29–32, *Herm.* 469–72, 516 f.; Nanaya hymn, 15–24; Marduk hymn, ed. W. G. Lambert, *AJO* 19, 1959/60, 62. 36–9 (Seux, 72; Foster, 527); Eboling (1953), 24. 17 f. (Seux, 315; Foster, 630); id., 114. 9–11 (Seux, 313); cf. id., 130. 18 f. (hymn to Ishtar: *ANET*, 384; Seux, 189; Foster, 511).

The deity of course exercises his power at his discretion, or, as another hymnic formula puts it, 'if/when/where he wishes'. Hesiod's hymn to Hecate again supplies instances:

By whom she wishes, she stands in full presence and helps him ..
He whom she wishes shines out among the crowd.
Also when men arm themselves for battle and slaughter,
there the goddess stands by whichever side she wishes
to bless with victory by her favour and hand them glory;
and she is good for standing by cavalry, those she wishes to.

In Homer Zeus grants prosperity to high and low, 'as he wishes'. Hermes takes up 'the wand with which he charms men's eyes to sleep, those he wishes to, and others who are asleep he wakes up'. Aphrodite, according to the Homeric Hymn, has even misled the mind of Zeus, 'whenever she wished', and bedded him with mortal women. People will say that a god could easily do such and such, 'if he should wish', and various other mentions of gods' activities carry a similar qualification. We find it also in an Old Babylonian hymn to Ishtar:

She holds in her grasp all divine authority;
she bestows it where she will (lit. where her heart is).

So too in the Old Testament:

Our God is in the heavens; whatever he wishes, he does.

A stream of water is the king's heart in Yahweh's hand:
he directs it onto whatever he wishes.

I created the earth, with the humankind and the animals that are upon the earth,
by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and I give it to whoever it is
right in my eyes.¹⁵¹

A related idea is that the god is equally capable of doing either of two opposite things. Hermes, as we have just seen, can put people to sleep or wake them up. Hesiod's Hecate can provide a fisherman with a good catch, or take away one that he has in his sights, and she can make a small flock of sheep large or a large one small. As for Zeus,

easily he makes strong, and easily he oppresses the strong,
easily he diminishes the conspicuous and magnifies the inconspicuous.

¹⁵¹ Hes. *Th.* 429–39, cf. 28; *Od.* 6. 188 f., II. 24. 344 = *Od.* 5. 48, *Hymn. Aphr.* 38; cf. II. 4. 41, 10. 556, 15. 492, *Od.* 3. 231, 10. 22, 14. 445, 16. 198, 23. 186; Agūšaya hymn, A ii 7–9; Ps. 115. 3 (cf. 135. 6, Job 23. 13), Prov. 21. 1, Jer. 27. 5 (Bogan, 397).

He 'increases or diminishes men's prestige, as he wishes'. In Sumerian and Akkadian poetry too the powers of a god are expressed in terms of polar opposites.

[I ma]ke right into left, I [ma]ke left into right ...
I make black into white, I make white into black.

My father, deep of heart, determiner of fates,
the power of creating and destroying lies with you.

To exalt and to abase, this is to be your 'hand' (i.e. power).

[She can tu]rn man into woman and woman into man.

[Laying waste] and (re-)settling lie with him.

Yahweh is praised with predication of similar form:

I kill and I give life; I wound and I heal.

Yahweh kills and gives life,
he sends down to Sheol and he brings up;
Yahweh makes poor and makes rich,
he abases, and also exalts.

I am the fashioner of light and the creator of darkness,
the maker of prosperity and the creator of ill.¹⁵²

The indispensability of the deity's assistance for certain purposes is expressed by saying that without him such and such does not happen. For example, in the Homeric Hymn to Hestia we read:

for not without you
do mortals have banquets—without one pouring
to Hestia first and last the libation of honey-sweet wine.

Not without the gods, according to an elegist, does either good or ill come to mankind. Many parallels can be quoted from Akkadian hymns.

Without you (Nusku, god of fire and light) no meal is prepared in Ekur,
without you your father Anu does not hold judgment
and Enlil the counsellor does not pronounce his decision;
without you the living are not in good order.

¹⁵² Hes. *Th.* 442–7, *Op.* 5 f., *Il.* 20, 242, cf. *Od.* 16, 211 f., *Archil.* 130, etc.; Haupt (as n. 149); Falkenstein-von Soden, 230 f.; *En. el.* II 61 f. (cf. IV 22–6, VI 131), IV 8; hymn to Ishtar, ed. W. G. Lambert in G. van Driel et al. (edd.), *Zikir Samim. Assyriological Studies Presented to F. R. Kraus*, Leiden 1982, 198, iii 70 (Seux, 95; Foster, 504), poem praising Nebuchadnezzar I, ed. W. G. Lambert, *JCS* 21, 1967, 128, 3 (Foster, 291); *Deut.* 32, 39, 1 Sam. 2, 6 f., *Isa.* 45, 7, cf. *Ps.* 75, 8(7) (Bogan, 389–393).

Without you (Sin, the moon) the scattered are not reunited.

Without you (Shamash) no verdict is pronounced.

Without you (Marduk) Shamash gives no judgment, without you no verdict is pronounced in the land ...

without you the seer does not operate correctly, without you the exorcist does not lay his hand on the sick,

without you the conjuror, the ecstatic, the snake-charmer do not go down the street;

without you people do not escape from trouble or difficulty;

without you the destitute and the widow are not looked after.¹⁵³

At the end of a hymn the Akkadian poet often uses the formula 'may I ever sing thy praises'.

May I ever sing your praises, not to be forgotten, to the wide peoples.

May I live, may I be well, may I proclaim your greatness,
may I sound your [praises to the wide peoples.

Many other examples might easily be drawn from the collections of Seux and Foster. We may compare the endings of the *Hymn to Demeter* and the *Delian hymn to Apollo*:

Be kind, repay my singing with comfortable income;
and I'll make remembrance both of you and of other song.

But as for me, I will not cease from hymning
far-shooting Apollo the silver-bowed, whom fair-tressed Leto bore.¹⁵⁴

Prayer motifs

Prayers have a place in several genres of Greek poetry. The epic poet 'reports' prayers that his heroes made, publicly or privately; the elegist, the iambographer, and the melicist voice them in their own persons, though for an audience; the tragedian makes his characters utter them in dramatic situations. We observe a number of typical motifs that recur in these literary prayers, and that are paralleled in those of the Near East.

In a polytheistic society someone addressing a prayer to a deity must begin by identifying the recipient. In Greek, and also in Akkadian, this is most commonly done by means of a vocative—the god's name, often

¹⁵³ *Hymn. Hom.* 29, 4, *Thgn.* 171; Ebeling (1953), 38, 30 f. (Seux, 319), 44, 41 (Seux, 281), 50, 13 (Seux, 288); id., *ZDMG* 69, 1915, 96 obv. 20, 25–9 (Seux, 450 f.; Foster, 607 f.). Cf. also Seux, 67 (Foster, 668), 254, 381, 436, 439, 455 (Foster, 671), 484, 489, 491 (Foster, 684).

¹⁵⁴ W. G. Lambert, *JNES* 33, 1974, 276, 39 (Seux, 204; Foster, 641); R. Caplice, *Or.* N.S. 39, 1970, 135, 16 f. (Seux, 357; Foster, 647); *Hymn. Dem.* 494 f., *Hymn. Ap.* 177 f.

embellished with a series of titles or epithets. Sometimes it is accompanied by the appeal 'hear me', as in the first prayer of the *Iliad*,

Hear me, Silverbow, you who stand over Chryse.

Or in this Akkadian prayer to the healing goddess:

O Gula, most great lady, merciful mother, who dwells in the pure heavens,

I call upon you, my lady: stand and hear me!

Or in the thirty-ninth Psalm:

Hear my prayer, o Yahweh, and to my cry give ear.¹⁵⁵

Sometimes the deity is asked to turn his eye as well as his ear towards the suppliant, or towards the situation which has provoked the appeal:

κλῦθι ἰδὼν αἰῶν τε.

Hearken, seeing and hearing.

O god gold-helmed, look, look upon the city
that once you made your favoured one.

City-gods of the land, come all of you, come,
see the maidens' crouching supplication concerning enslavement.

Look upon me, my lord, accept my supplication.

Look upon me truly, accept my supplication.

Incline thine ear, Yahweh, and hear; open thine eye, Yahweh, and see.¹⁵⁶

The expression 'I call upon you' in the prayer to Gula quoted above is found in other places too: not only in Akkadian, but also in Ugaritic and Hebrew.

I call upon you, O Gods of the Night;

with you I call upon Night, the veiled bride,

I call upon the Evening Watch, the Midnight Watch, and the
Dawn Watch.

¹⁵⁵ *Il.* 1. 37 = 451, cf. 5. 115, 10. 278, 16. 514, 23. 770, etc.; W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen 'Gebetsbeschwörungen'*, Rome 1976, 450 (Falkenstein-von Soden, 327; Seux, 337; Foster, 582), cf. Ebeling (1953), 78. 59 (Falkenstein-von Soden, 304; Seux, 445 f.; Foster, 595 f.), Ps. 39. 13(12), cf. 5. 2(1) f., 17. 1, 6, 71. 2, 84. 9(8), 141. 1, 143. 1, Isa. 37. 17, Dan. 9. 17-19.

¹⁵⁶ Hes. *Op.* 9, Aesch. *Sept.* 106-10, cf. *Supp.* 79, 104, 531, 811, etc.; Ebeling (1953), 22. 9 (Seux, 273; Foster, 563), 60. 23 (Falkenstein-von Soden, 335; Seux, 323; Foster, 587); Isa. 37. 17 = 2 Ki. 19. 16.

I will call upon the Gracious Gods.

Yahweh, I call upon thee: hasten to me;

give ear to my voice as I call to thee.

In Greek it first appears in Aeschylus, who has it several times. The Danaids, in response to their father's direction to call upon 'this bird of Zeus', say 'We call upon the saving rays of Helios'. The chorus of the *Agamemnon* relate that Calchas prayed 'I call then upon Ie-Paian, that he may not make any long, back-blowing ship-delays for the Danaans'. Clytemnestra's ghost concludes her entreaty to the Erinyes with the solemn line

ἄναρ γὰρ ὑμᾶς νῦν Κλυταιμήστρα καλῶ.

For upon you in dream I, Clytemnestra, now call.¹⁵⁷

The effect is of a compelling summons, a magical conjuration, and it is no accident that the formula is common in later Greek magical hymns and spells and in the Orphic Hymns.

Sometimes the god is indeed asked to come to the suppliant, to stand at his side and help him from close quarters. Many of the Akkadian prayers contain the request 'stand forward' or 'stand for me'. From a Hebrew psalm I have just quoted the words 'I call upon thee: hasten to me' (so the Masoretic text; the Septuagint has 'hearken to me'), and in others we find

O God, do not be distant from me; my God, hasten to my help,

or something similar. In Greek this motif is familiar at all periods. Hesiod hails the Muses of Pieria with δεῦρε, '(come) hither'. Odysseus, running in the foot-race in the games for Patroclus, prays to Athena:

Hear me, goddess, and come as a good helper for my legs.

Sappho prays for Aphrodite to come from Zeus' house to her presence to deliver her from her suffering.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ G. Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungsserie Maqlû* (*Afo Beiheft* 2. 1937), 7 (Seux, 375, Foster, 577), cf. *OECT* 6. 48 (Seux, 392; Foster, 664), etc.; *KTU* 1. 23. 1 and 23, cf. 21 ii 2 and 10, 22 ii 4, 9, 19; Ps. 141. 1, cf. 17. 6; Aesch. *Supp.* 213, Ag. 146, *Eum.* 116, cf. *Cho.* 4, 130, 456, *Eum.* 28, 287, [Aesch.] *P.V.* 91.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. J. Læssøe, *Iraq* 18, 1956, 62. 26 (Seux, 354; Foster, 559); R. Caplice, *Or. N.S.* 39, 1970, 127. 18 ff. (Seux, 250; Foster, 576); Ebeling (1953), 78. 59 (Falkenstein-von Soden, 304; Seux, 446; Foster, 596); Ps. 71. 12, cf. 22. 20(19), 38. 22(21) f., 70. 2(1); Hes. *Op.* 2, *Il.* 23. 770, Sapph. 1. 5; cf. also *Il.* 10. 284-91 (291 'stand by me'), Aesch. *Sept.* 108, *Eum.* 289, *Ar. Nub.* 266/9, *Thesm.* 1136-59, and further references in my note on Hes. *l.c.*

But the deity's whereabouts are not necessarily fixed. There may be a number of places that he is known to frequent. Hence the appeal to 'hear' or 'come' is sometimes accompanied by a list of alternative locations, in the form 'whether you are in ... or in ... or ...'. Teucer prays to Apollo in the *Iliad*:

Hear me, lord, who are perhaps in Lycia's rich country
or in the Trojan land, but you are able to hear everywhere.

More extended examples occur later, as in the Aristophanic Socrates' invocation of the divine Clouds. He calls for them to come,

whether you are sitting on the holy, snow-beaten peaks of Olympus,
or setting the Nymphs' holy dance in father Oceanus' gardens,
or drawing with golden jugs from the waters of the Nile,
or occupying Maeotis' lagoon, or the snowy crag of Minas.

I have not come across an instance of this device in the Semitic literatures. But it is certain that it was established in at least parts of the Near East many centuries before Homer. There is a very lengthy example, too long to quote in full, in a Hittite invocation performed by diviners and recorded in a ritual text:

Wherever ye may be, O Cedar-gods, whether in heaven or on earth, whether on mountains or in rivers, whether in the Mitanni country or in the country of Kinza, the country of Tunip, the country of Ugarit, the country of Zinzira, the country of Dunanapa, the country of Idarukatta ... (and so on for ten more lines) ... the country of Lalha, in the Kashkean country or in whatever other countries—come ye now back to the Hatti land!

The god Telbinu was invoked daily on behalf of the king with a prayer that contained the sentences

Now whether, esteemed Telbinu, you are up in heaven among the gods, or gone to the sea or to tour the mountains, or gone to the country of the enemy to battle, let the sweet and soothing cedar essence lure you! Come home to your temple!¹⁵⁹

In setting out titles and powers of the deity, the suppliant is likely to focus on those which are particularly relevant to his own immediate concerns. For example, he will emphasize that the god is a god of justice before going on to pray for the application of justice to his own case. Or

¹⁵⁹ *Il.* 16. 514 f., *Ar. Nub.* 270–3, cf. *Aesch. Eum.* 292–6, *Mel. adesp.* 950a, and from later verse *Theoc.* 1. 123 f., *Orph. Hymn.* 42. 5–11, 49. 5–7, 55. 15–26, *KUB* xv. 34 i 50–65 and duplicates, trs. A. Goetze in *ANET* 352 (*CTH* 483); xxiv. 2 i 8–10 (*ANET* 396; Lebrun, 181; *CTH* 376), another example in *CTH* 406, trs. G. Frantz-Szabó after H. A. Hoffner in *CANE* iii. 2014.

the appeal itself may be reinforced by the assertion 'this is something that lies within your power'. Teucer's prayer, quoted above, may serve as one instance, and when Zeus urges Athena to escort Telemachus safely back to Ithaca from Sparta and inserts a parenthetic δύνασαι γάρ, 'for you have the ability', this is a reflection of the prayer formula.¹⁶⁰ Here are a couple of selected Akkadian examples:

I am burning and I weep bitterly,
tears are bursting from my eyes.
O Shamash, abatement lies within your reach:
undo (and) send far away the guilt of (my) father and mother.

[L]oss, des[truct]ion, and ev[il] against my spouse]
[and] my wives, my sons and daughters [is fastened] upon me and
has [me] permanently overw[helmed].
(The power) to save, spare, and res[cue] li[ves] with you:
you are [m]erciful, [sp]are my life!¹⁶¹

'To engage the god's sympathy and stimulate his sense of obligation, the suppliant may remind him of the sacrifices and offerings he has made in the past.

Hear me, Silverbow, you who stand over Chryse
and godly Killa, and are the lord of Tenedos,
Smintheus: if ever I have decked your lovely shrine,
or if ever I have burned for you fatty thighbones
of oxen and goats, fulfil this wish for me.¹⁶²

There are many more examples in Greek literature, but no evidence from inscriptions, suggesting that this a literary motif that does not reflect cult usage.¹⁶³ Much earlier instances can be quoted from oriental texts.

Etana kept praying daily to Shamash:
'You have eaten, Shamash, the thickest cuts of my sheep;
Earth, you have drunk (or: Earth has drunk) the blood of my lambs
I have honoured the gods, I have held the spirits of the dead in awe;
the dream interpreters have burned up all my incense;
the gods have used up all my sacrificial lambs.
My lord, let (the word) go forth from your mouth

¹⁶⁰ *Od.* 5. 25; see for further references my note on *Hes. Th.* 420.

¹⁶¹ W. G. Lambert, *JNES* 33, 1974, 274. 13–16 (Seux, 200; Foster, 554); E. Ebeling, *ZA* 51, 1955, 172–4 rev. 5–8 (Foster, 672).

¹⁶² *Il.* 1. 37–41. The recital of places where the god is powerful may be seen as a variant of the 'whether you are in—' motif.

¹⁶³ *Il.* 8. 238–41, 15. 372–6, (22. 170), *Od.* (1. 61), 4. 763–6, 17. 240–2, *Aesch. Sept.* 180 f., (10. 255, *Eum.* 106–9, *Hdt.* 1. 87. 1 (Croesus), *Ar. Pax* 385–7, *Lys.* 2. 39.

and give me the plant of birth.'

In poetic prayers composed on behalf of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233-1197) and Assurnasirpal I (1049-1031) the addressees, Aššur and Ishtar respectively, are reminded that the king has maintained the purity and regularity of religious rites, made constant prayers and offerings, sacrificed sheep, restored sanctuaries, and so on. Hittite kings too, praying for deliverance from affliction, would refer to all their pious pieties and to the quantities of gifts already made. From the Old Testament we may quote the twentieth Psalm:

May Yahweh answer you in the day of affliction,
may the name of the God of Jacob defend you.
May he send you help from the sanctuary
and from Zion support you.
May he remember all your offerings
and make fat(?) your burnt sacrifice.¹⁶⁴

There are also examples of the deity being reminded of his own promises. However, as it is only in rather special cases and circumstances that people believe themselves to have received promises from a god, this is a comparatively rare and literary motif.¹⁶⁵

In gratitude for Eumaeus' hospitality Odysseus says to him, 'may Zeus and the other immortals give you whatever you most want'. Later he prays to Zeus that Telemachus may prosper among men, 'and may he get everything that he designs in his heart'. Sappho uses the same formula in praying to Aphrodite and the Nereids on behalf of her brother: 'grant that everything be fulfilled that he wishes for in his heart'. She prays similarly to Aphrodite on her own behalf: 'fulfil whatever my heart desires'.

This 'blank cheque' form of prayer, then, may be made for oneself, for the person one is speaking to, or for a third party: 'whatever my/your/his heart desires'. For the first two of these options, at least, there are oriental parallels. Thus in Babylonian prayers we find: 'whatever I long for, let me attain'. And in a Hebrew psalm to be sung before the king:

May he give you as your heart (desires), and fulfil all your plans.¹⁶⁶

Over the last three chapters we have compared the poetic traditions of early Greece with those of western Asia, firstly in terms of their general conceptions of the world, the gods, and mankind, secondly in terms of poetic techniques, and most lately in terms of diction. This more general part of the investigation is now completed. It is time to focus more closely on specific poets and poems. It will hardly be possible to avoid commenting on some of the phenomena discussed above when we encounter them in context and, sometimes, in combination. But it will by no means be merely a matter of redistributing material that has already been presented. There is much more to come.

¹⁶⁶ *Od.* 14. 53 f., 17. 354 f., cf. 6. 180; Sappho 5. 3, 1. 26; Ebeling (1953), 63-37, 65. 12 (Seux, 421, 291; Foster, 587, 599); Ps. 20. 5(4); Bogan, 222.

¹⁶⁴ *Etana* II 131-9 (noted by Dirlmeier, 24 f.); E. Ebeling, *MVAG* 23(1), 1918, 65. 17-20 (Seux, 496; Foster, 233 f.); W. von Soden, *A/O* 25, 1974/7, 39. 31-40 (Seux, 498 f.; Foster, 240 f.); Plague Prayers of Mursili, Lebrun, 209 (*ANET* 396 (a) § 10; *CTH* 378); prayer of Arnuwanda, Lebrun, 133 f. (*ANET* 399 i; *CTH* 375), Ps. 20. 2-4(1-3).

¹⁶⁵ *Il.* 15. 372-5, *Od.* 10. 480-4; *Gilg.* V i (*RA* 62. 105); Ps. 89. 20(19) ff., cf. 2 Ki. 20. 3, Neh. 13-14 (Bogan, 258).

6 Hesiod

If I take Hesiod before Homer, it is not simply because I believe the Hesiodic poems to have been composed somewhat earlier than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—that issue is not important in the present context—but also because Hesiod is the one Greek poet in whose work the presence of substantial oriental elements is already generally admitted. No one nowadays would write a commentary on the *Theogony* or the *Works and Days* without referring to them. Hesiod, therefore, should provide something like an agreed point of departure, a safe launching pad, for the following discussions of the Homeric epics and other poetry.

THE THEOGONY

The earlier of Hesiod's two authentic extant works, the *Theogony*, is a narrative poem preceded by a hymnic proemium addressed to the Muses. The narrative begins at the beginning of the world and follows the births of the gods in their generations down to the youngest, the children of Zeus and their coevals. Interleaved with the genealogies is what has come to be called the Succession Myth, an account of how the first divine father figure, Ouranos or Heaven, was displaced from his dominant position by his son Kronos, and how Kronos, the king of the Titans or Former Gods, was in turn overthrown by Zeus with the younger gods, who now rule the world and may be expected to continue doing so.

The *Theogony* is the only known example of its genre in early Greek poetry down to about 500 bc; the 'Orphic' theogony composed about that time and others composed subsequently seem usually to have taken Hesiod as their model.¹ We may be sure that Hesiod's was not in fact unique in its time. The poet of the *Iliad* appears to have known a different one,² and there will have been others in oral if not written circulation.

The closest analogues to Hesiod's poem are to be found in the Near East. Many peoples have cosmogonies or divine genealogies in poetry or

in prose literature.³ But the motif that the present ruler of the gods came to power by defeating or disabling an older one, and that this was not the first such critical event, seems to be specifically Near Eastern. Hesiod's integration of a dynastic history of this sort with a divine genealogy, starting from the beginning of things and ending with the king of the gods established in glory, has its closest parallel in *Enūma eliš*, a poem of similar length to the *Theogony*. His Succession Myth also shows significant points of contact with the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Kumarbi*. Let us proceed, as a first step, to examine the similarities between these three texts.

The Hesiodic narrative

According to Hesiod's account, the first thing that came into being was Chaos, followed by Gaia (Earth), Tartara, and Eros. Chaos, giving birth as a single parent to Erebus and Night, started off one line of descent. Gaia gave birth to Ouranos, the Mountains, and the Sea, and then, coupled with Ouranos, she produced a longer series of gods, the six gods and six goddesses who were to receive the collective name of Titans, and in addition the three Cyclopes and the three Hundred-Handers. This is the first major two-parent family.

Ouranos, however, abhors his children and prevents them from coming to light, keeping them confined within Gaia. Sorely constipated, she calls upon her children to punish their cruel father. They are afraid and remain silent, but then Kronos takes courage and volunteers. Armed with a sickle of adamant, he waits in ambush, and when Ouranos comes at nightfall to make love to Gaia, he slices off his genitals. This frees the oppressed youngsters (as if it had been the unremitting intercourse of Ouranos and Gaia that had kept them inside their mother), and from now on Ouranos plays no further active role in the story. Presumably, now that he is irremediably separated from Gaia, he remains aloof in his present position as the sky. The drops of blood from his severed genitals fall upon the earth and from them are born the Erinyes, the Giants, and the Meliai, while from the genitals themselves, which Kronos throws in the sea, Aphrodite comes into being.

After genealogical sections listing the descendants of Night, Sea, and the lesser Titans, we reach the second episode of the Succession Myth. Kronos has six children by his sister Rhea but, because of a prophecy that one of them will overcome him, he swallows each one immediately after birth. When it comes to the sixth, Rhea deceives him: she smuggles the boy, Zeus, to Crete, and presents Kronos with a stone wrapped up like a

¹ My remarks in West (1966), 12, require modification in the light of the conclusions reached in West (1983), chs 2–3 on the dating of these later theogonies. The theogonic passage attested for a lyric poem of Aleman (*PMGF* 5 fr. 2 ii–iii) remains noteworthy, as does the early prose theogony of Pherecydes of Syros.

² See below chapter 7, on *Il.* 14. 201–7.

³ See the survey in West (1966), 1–13.

baby. He neglects to examine the package closely and swallows it. Zeus rapidly grows up, and then somehow causes Kronos to disgorge the stone and the swallowed gods. Zeus sets the stone in the earth at Delphi as a sign and a wonder to mortals.

The third episode is a ten-year war between the Titans and the younger gods. The conflict is finally decided when, on Gaia's advice, Zeus brings the Hundred-Handers up from the lower world. With their aid the Titans are defeated and bound in Tartarus, far below the earth.

After this a new enemy of Zeus appears. Gaia and Tartarus engender the fearsome monster Typhoeus. He looks set to become king of gods and men, but Zeus overwhelms him with his thunderbolts and flings him into Tartarus.

Zeus is now acclaimed king of the gods. He apportions their functions and privileges, and undertakes a series of marriages. His first wife, Metis, is destined to bear a son stronger than Zeus, but Zeus pre-empted this by swallowing her, thus halting the cycle of succession. She does give birth to a formidable daughter, Athena, who emerges through Zeus' skull. His other wives give birth to various further divinities.

Kumarbi

Let us now turn to the *Song of [Kumarbi]*, recorded in its Hittite version some five hundred years before Hesiod. Only the first tablet is preserved—we do not know how many more there were—and much of that is so damaged that it becomes hard to follow what is happening.

After an invocation of various gods who are invited to listen to the tale, it recounts that once, long ago, Alalu was king. His reign lasted for nine years. In the ninth year his cupbearer Anu gave battle against him and defeated him. Alalu fled down to the dark earth, and Anu took over the throne. For nine years he was king in heaven, but then his cupbearer Kumarbi, who was of the seed of Alalu, fought and overcame him. Anu made off towards the sky, but Kumarbi caught him by the feet as he ascended, bit off his 'manhood', and swallowed it. Adding insult to injury, he then gave vent to a triumphant laugh.

Anu warns him not to be too pleased with himself, because he has swallowed three terrible gods: the storm-god Teššub,⁴ Teššub's attendant Tašmišu, and the river Tigris. Anu then completes his withdrawal to the sky. Kumarbi spits out what he can, and as a result of this it would seem that Mount Kanzura gives birth to the frightful god And[...]. But several gods evidently remain inside Kumarbi. They now seem to include divinities written as ^dA.GILIM and ^dKA.ZAL, and there is also

⁴ This is his Hurrian name; cf. p. 103 n. 119.

discussion of how they might come out. ^dKA.ZAL perhaps comes up out of his skull, though the translation is uncertain. Kumarbi is upset, and says to Ea, 'Give me my [so]n, I will eat [h]im. Which wife of mine(?) ... What [...] Teššub to me, I will eat: I will crush (him) like a br[ittle] (red)'. A few lines later he does eat something; it hurts his mouth and teeth, and he cries in pain. Someone says to him, 'Let them call [it the] stone, and let it be placed in [...]'. He throws the basalt to the place indicated, saying, 'Let them go and call you [...], and let r[ich men] (and) warrior lords slaughter for you cattle [(and) sheep]; let poor men sacrifice meal to you.' These sacrifices begin forthwith, and Kumarbi's split cranium(?) is mended. The text of this section is tantalizingly broken, but to all appearances Kumarbi has been given a lump of basalt in place of the child he intended to eat. After ejecting it from his mouth he sets it down at some particular place on earth, where it becomes a cult object.

Teššub now emerges from Kumarbi's body through 'the good place' (which also seems to need repairing as a result). In the next column it looks as if hostile words of Kumarbi, and perhaps Ea, are being reported to Teššub by his bull Šeri. Teššub thinks he has sufficiently weakened his enemies by means of curses and otherwise, and he wonders who can now do battle with him. Šeri warns him against overconfidence: what if he hears his curses? They are indeed reported to Ea, who is angry. The remainder of the tablet is mostly destroyed, apart from a passage at the end where Earth becomes pregnant, perhaps by a Wagon. She goes to her 'town of Abzūwa' (i.e. the Apsu) and gives birth to two children. Ea receives the news with pleasure. If this is to be connected with what was going on before the long gap, we may suppose that the birth of the two children has been masterminded by Ea, and that they will somehow prove a threat to Teššub.

Comparison of the Kumarbi myth with Hesiod

The striking similarities of this Hurrian narrative to the Hesiodic myth were recognized as soon as the text was read.⁵ Let us specify them.

1. Assuming that Teššub is to be treated as the successor of Kumarbi and as the present king of the gods (as he is in other texts), we have a sequence Alalu, Anu, Kumarbi, Teššub. Alalu, apparently a god of the earth, has no counterpart in the Hesiodic succession, but the other three

⁵ H. Porter in *Mélanges Franz Cumont, Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire orientales et slaves*, 4, 1936, 687–713. Cf. R. D. Barnett, *JHS* 65, 1945, 100 f.; Güterbock (1946); *W. AJA* 52, 1948, 123–34; Walcot, 1–26; further literature in A. Heubeck, *Gymnasium* 62, 1955, 812–12; Heitsch, 552; West (1966), 106 f.; C. Scott Littleton, 'The "Kingship in Heaven" Theme', in J. P. P. (ed.), *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1970, 83–121.

correspond to Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus. Anu's name, like Ouranos', means Sky; he is a direct borrowing from the Mesopotamian pantheon (Akkadian Anu(m) from Sumerian An). Kumarbi was a Hurrian corn-god;⁶ Kronos has become so much a mythological figure in Greece that his original nature is difficult to establish, but many scholars have concluded, from his wielding a sickle and from the celebration of his festival following the harvest, that he was a god of harvest.⁷ Teššub, like Zeus, is the storm-god.

2. Anu, like Ouranos, has his genitals cut off, and thereupon removes himself to heaven. From the genitals other divinities spring.

3. As Anu warns Kumarbi that there is trouble in store for him as a result of what he has done, so Ouranos (Th. 210) warns the Titans that they will have to pay later for their castration of him.

4. Kumarbi, like Kronos, has a number of gods in his belly for a time, including the storm-god. The Hittite and Greek accounts give different explanations of how the gods got there, but both involve deliberate acts of swallowing by the host god.

5. At one point Kumarbi actually does announce his intention of eating one of his children, and, like Kronos, he is provided with a stone instead. He takes it into his mouth and expels it again, after which it is set up as a cult object.

6. After this the storm-god becomes powerful, and there are hostilities between him and Kumarbi/Kronos with their respective allies.

7. In the Hittite text Earth gives birth in the subterranean Apsu to two children who, we infer, will pose a new threat to Teššub. According to Hesiod's poem, Earth in union with Tartarus⁸ gives birth to Typhoeus, who poses a new threat to Zeus. Presumably Teššub successfully demolished his adversaries, as Zeus did his.

8. Finally, if it is really the case that the deity 'KA.ZAL issues out of Kumarbi's skull, as Athena does from Zeus', the motif of birth through a male god's cranium appears in both narratives.

Enūma eliš

The Babylonian poem begins with no preamble. It starts from the primordial state of the world, before heaven and earth were named, or any of the gods. Apsu and Tiamat, the sweet subterranean water and the sea, were mingled in one. Then gods were born inside them: first Lahmu and Lahamu, then their children Anshar and Kishar; Anshar was the

father of Anu; Anu was the father of Nudimmud, otherwise known as Ea, who was very wise and powerful and far surpassed his forebears.

The noisy vigour of these gods stirs up Tiamat's insides; neither she nor Apsu can control them. He proposes to destroy them. She objects, but the vizier Mummu supports Apsu and discusses the plan with him. Their plotting is reported (by Tiamat?) to the young gods, who fall silent in dismay. But the wise Ea devises a counter-measure. Casting a magic sleep on Apsu, he strips him of his sash, his crown, and his fearsome radiance and puts them on himself. He ties Apsu up, kills him, and sets his own dwelling on top of him.

In this residence, itself now called Apsu, Ea lives with his consort Damkina, and their mighty son Marduk is born. Anu gives his young grandson the four winds to play with. He uses them to raise dust storms and whirlwinds, making Tiamat turbid and restless. The gods inside her, unable to sleep, find it insupportable and urge her to avenge Apsu. She agrees and they prepare for war. Mother Hubur, the goddess who forms all things,⁹ creates eleven species of monster to fight for them. Qingu is appointed commander and given the Tablet of Destinies.

Ea is taken aback when he hears of this. After consulting Anshar, he goes out to try his spells on Tiamat, but she is too powerful and he retreats intimidated. Anshar sends Anu out to pacify her, but he too returns abashed. Anshar is at a loss. Ea now urges Marduk to offer his services as saviour of the gods. Marduk does offer them, demanding the supreme power as his fee. Anshar invites the older gods to a feast, at which they get very merry and bestow the kingship upon Marduk.

Marduk arms himself with a bow, a mace, lightning, a net, and his four winds, and in addition he creates seven more terrible winds. Mounting his storm-chariot, he sallies forth against Tiamat. Encircling her with his net, he discharges his tempest at her just as she opens her mouth to swallow him. It inflates her to bursting, and through her mouth, which she cannot now close, he shoots an arrow and pierces her heart. Her allies try to flee but are caught in the great net. He binds and imprisons them, and the eleven monsters he fastens with nose-ropes and tramples underfoot. Qingu too is bound, and has to surrender the Tablet of Destinies to Marduk.

From Tiamat's great carcass, which he splits in two like a fish, Marduk creates heaven and earth. Then he makes stellar stations for the gods, marks out the year and the months, and sets the moon going to a strict schedule. The gods rejoice and acclaim their king. In collaboration with Ea he slays Qingu and makes mankind from his blood, to relieve the

⁶ See E. Laroche in *Ugaritica* v, 1968, 524 f.; *RIA* s.v. Kumarbi; G. Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 52; R. Lebrun, *CANE* iii, 1971.

⁷ See West (1966), 205.

⁸ Tartarus may have watery connotations; see West (1966), 195.

⁹ Perhaps an alias of Tiamat herself.

gods of their burdens. The six hundred gods he divides into two equal parties, one to occupy heaven, the other the lower world. To honour him they build Babylon as his seat. The poem ends with a lengthy recital of Marduk's fifty ceremonial names and a short epilogue.

Comparison of *Enūma eliš* with Hesiod

Enūma eliš is not a theogony in the sense that it attempts a complete genealogy of the gods, as Hesiod does. What it gives is the ancestry of Marduk, the story of how Marduk came to power, and Marduk's creation and organization of the present cosmos. The parallelism with the Hesiodic narrative is not as close as in the case of the Hurro-Hittite account. Nevertheless, there are some unmistakable similarities, and they include some that are absent from the *Song of Kumarbi*.

1. The story begins with a pair of primeval, elemental parents in close union. In the Babylonian poem they are the cosmic waters, Apsu and Tiamat; in Hesiod they are Heaven and Earth, though in the Homeric theogony this position is occupied by Oceanus and Tethys, who make a closer match for Apsu and Tiamat.
2. The primeval parents have many children, who remain inside their mother and cause her distress. The father hates them and wishes to suppress them, but the mother opposes him.
3. The young gods are struck dumb with fear, but then one of them (Ea, Kronos) takes bold action to overcome and disable the oppressive father. The castration motif which is shared by Hesiod with the Hurro-Hittite version is absent from the Babylonian: Apsu is made impotent in a more comprehensive sense and by other means.
4. The victor in this encounter is the son of the personified Sky and becomes the father of the eventual king: Ea is the son of Anu and father of Marduk, as Kronos is the son of Ouranos and father of Zeus. There is a further point of correspondence between Ea and Kronos in that Ea is noted for wisdom and clever ideas, while Kronos has the formulaic epithet ἀγκυλομήτης, originally meaning probably 'of the curved sickle', but certainly understood by Hesiod to mean 'crooked-planning, sly'.¹⁰
5. Although Marduk has no conflict with his father, he must, like Zeus, encounter and defeat in battle a huge and terrifying opponent before establishing his rule. Again like Zeus, he uses fierce winds and lightning bolts as his weapons in the fight.
6. Following this victory, both Marduk and Zeus are acclaimed by the gods as their king.

¹⁰ See West (1966), 158.

In all three versions of the Succession Myth that we have considered we have found parallel sequences of gods: Anu, Kumarbi, Teššub; Anu, Ea, Marduk; Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus. In each case the first is the personified Sky, and the third, besides being the present king of the gods, has the character of a storm-god, or has absorbed a storm-god's functions as part of his total persona. As for the second, Kronos may perhaps be linked with Kumarbi as a corn or harvest deity, and with Ea as cunning and resourceful.

Hurro-Hittite	Babylonian	Greek
Anu = Sky	Anu = Sky	Ouranos = Sky
	father of	father of
Kumarbi (corn)	Ea (clever)	Kronos (corn?, clever)
'father' of	father of	father of
Teššub	Marduk	Zeus

In the Babylonian and Greek versions each is the son of the one before. This is not so in the Hurro-Hittite tradition, as Kumarbi is the seed of the previous king Alalu, and Teššub of Anu, though he can also be considered the son of Kumarbi inasmuch as he is born from his body. In this version the sequence is explicitly a dynastic one: the focus is on who is king. In the other traditions this dynastic aspect is less consistently held in view. In *Enūma eliš* Anu does not appear as a king; Ea appropriates a sash, a crown, and a radiance from Apsu, but in what follows it is Anshar who is treated as the king of the gods (and Qingu holds the Tablet of Destinies) until Marduk acquires the position. In Hesiod Ouranos is not called a king; Kronos is referred to as 'the king of the Former Gods',¹¹ and Zeus is explicitly invited to take up the kingship after his enemies have been laid low.

Sanchuniathon: a Phoenician version?

We possess extensive excerpts from Herennius Philo's Greek adaptation of the *Phoenician History* of Sanchuniathon of Beirut.¹² This Philo, often called Philo of Byblos, flourished under Hadrian and Pius. He claimed that Sanchuniathon, living before the Trojan War, had gathered his information from histories current in various cities and from temple inscriptions. He had found some books written in 'Ammounean' (Ammonite?) characters, which were not familiar to everyone, but which

¹¹ Th. 486, where the manuscripts give 'former king of the gods'; cf. Op. 111.

¹² FGRII 790 F 1-7; cf. above, p. 101.

he had been able to decipher, and he had consulted the works of Thoth or Hermes, the world's first writer and indeed the inventor of writing.

These sound like typical mountebank claims, and one can understand why some scholars in the past entertained the deepest suspicions of Philo's good faith, and took his Sanchuniathon for a fiction. However, it is now generally admitted that there was a genuine Phoenician work behind Philo's, albeit a much less ancient one than he claimed; it may have been of Hellenistic date.¹³

Sanchuniathon-Philo strings into a continuous tale several mythological narratives that were originally independent and drawn from different sources. One of these is a tangled story in which we easily recognize a version of our Succession Myth.¹⁴ It involves an Ouranos who marries his sister Ge and is deposed and castrated by his son Kronos, and a Zeus who rules as king.

These persons are, to be sure, presented not as gods but as human beings; Philo has turned Sanchuniathon's divine mythology into a Euhemeristic history, though in a couple of places he has accidentally left references to the characters as gods. The Greek names that they bear are Philo's equivalents for the Semitic names of the original. In some cases he gives these as well. Kronos is *Ēlos*, that is, *El*. Zeus is *Dēmarous*, and probably also *Adōdos* = *Adad/Hadad*; the name *Demarous* resembles *Dmm*, a name of Baal/Hadad found in Ugaritic texts. At the end of the section Philo ridicules the Greeks for having taken over and distorted Phoenician traditions, and he refers specifically to Hesiod and the Cyclic poets as having elaborated their Theogonies and Gigantomachies and Titanomachies on this basis. Clearly he had Hesiod in view when he chose the Greek identities for Sanchuniathon's deities.

This might be the explanation of the curious dual identity of *El-Kronos'* father. Philo introduces him as 'Epigeios the autochthon, whom they later called Ouranos'. Epigeios, 'Terrestrial', must be an attempt to render a Semitic name in the original, which we cannot recover, but which seems the antithesis of Ouranos. Either Sanchuniathon conflated two separate figures, or Philo added Ouranos to fit the Hesiodic sequence. He may have modified the story at other points in order to make it match Hesiod's more closely.

This being so, we shall not waste our time in going through his narrative in detail and remarking all the correspondences with Hesiod. It can hardly provide any additional evidence for Hesiod's use of oriental material. What may be worth while, on the other hand, is to pick out

certain features which are not Hesiodic, which appear to have been in the Phoenician original, and which may show signs of preserving an oriental tradition akin to those discussed above.

Sanchuniathon's story is centred on Byblos, and begins with one *Elyôn*. This is the well-attested divine title 'Elyôn, 'the High One', known from the Old Testament and an Aramaic inscription, and Philo identifies it correctly as *Hypsistos*. He has a wife *Bērouth*, 'Wells(?)'. He enters in an engagement with wild beasts (while hunting?) and receives a chthonic cult. His children are the above-mentioned *Epigeios-Ouranos* and the daughter whom Philo identifies as *Ge*. These two marry each other, and their sons include *El*, *Baityl*, and *Dagon*, all known Phoenician deities. *El*, with his allies the *Elohim*, makes war on his father and deposes him. Ouranos' pregnant concubine is taken and given in marriage to *Dagon*. She gives birth to the child she was carrying, and names him *Demarous*. Later *Demarous* (-*Adodos*) rules as king of the earth with *El's* support; there appears to have been no violence between *Demarous* and *El*, and no definitive overthrow of *El*, who remains as a benign presence in the background.

As in the Hurro-Hittite tradition, the eventual king has three predecessors, not just two as in Hesiod. The first, *Elyôn*, seems from the Adonis-like manner of his death to be identified as a dying god of the type who is bewailed.¹⁵ It may be possible to see *Alalu*, the chthonic figure who is the first king in the Hittite text, in a similar light. He cannot be separated from the *Alala* who appears among the forefathers of *Anu* in some Babylonian god-lists.¹⁶ *Alala* is the personification of the agrarian *alala*-song, the name of which is sometimes written with the divine determinative. This seems to have been a joyous song, not a lament for a dead god, but the comparison is suggestive.

Where Hesiod speaks simply of Kronos castrating Ouranos, Sanchuniathon speaks of *El* and his allies waging war against him; only later, thirty-two years after he has been deposed, is he castrated. This may be compared with the Hurro-Hittite narrative, where *Kumarbi* gives battle against *Anu* and only at the end of it, as *Anu* tries to flee, bites off his genitals.

The role of *Dagon* in Sanchuniathon's story is interesting in view of the fact that this Syrian corn-god (Philo coins Σίτων as his Greek rendering) was equated with the Hurrian *Kumarbi*. They stand in the same positions in god-lists from Ugarit, and *Kumarbi's* name is sometimes replaced by the word for 'grain'; the goddess *Šalaš* appears as

¹³ See *CQ* 44, 1994, 293 f.

¹⁴ *FGHst* 790 F 2 § 15-41 (809. 14-813. 22 Jacoby); commentary in Baumgarten, 180-243.

¹⁵ Baumgarten, 186.

¹⁶ Güterbock, 106.

the wife of both of them.¹⁷ As in the Hurrian myth the storm-god is born from the seed of Heaven which Kumarbi has taken over, and Sanchuniathon's Demarous—the storm-god, if it is correct that the writer identified him with Adad—is born from the seed of Epigeios-Ouranos which Dagon has taken over (in a more humdrum way).¹⁸ The parallelism implies that 'Ouranos' was after all integral to Sanchuniathon's narrative and not an addition by Philo.¹⁹

Finally, the position of El as a continuing benevolent presence behind the present régime corresponds to his status in the Ugaritic texts.

We conclude that Sanchuniathon-Philo contains, buried under perhaps several layers of re-elaboration, a kernel of genuine Phoenician mythological tradition going back to the late Bronze Age. The significance of this for Hesiod is the implication that a form of the Succession Myth akin to the Hurro Hittite remained current in the Levant throughout the first half of the first millennium.

The Hymn to the Muses (Th. 1–115)

We will now go through the *Theogony* section by section, supplementing our study of the Succession Myth with more detailed discussion of certain motifs and with observations on various individual passages. We begin with the initial hymn to the Muses.

It was remarked in chapter 4 that the Muses are purely Greek figures who have no counterpart in the poetic traditions of western Asia. The oriental poet does not pray to a divinity for poetic inspiration. Nevertheless, it is not unknown for him to receive it unsolicited, as Hesiod claims in the case of his *Theogony*. In a famous passage which became the object of many imitations and allusions in later Greek and Latin literature, Hesiod states that the Muses taught him fine singing as he was pasturing his sheep on Mt. Helicon. They addressed him in these words:

Shepherds that camp in the wild, disgraces, merest bellies:
we know to tell many lies that sound like truth,
but we know to sing reality, when we will.²⁰

They gave him a bay-branch sceptre, breathed into him the power to sing of past and future, and instructed him to sing in particular of the race of the gods, and of themselves. In my commentary of 1966 I followed

¹⁷ E. Laroche, *Ugaritica* v, 1968, 523–5.

¹⁸ Already in the Ugaritic texts B¹-Hd (= Haddu, Hadad) appears as the son of Dgn.

¹⁹ His original place there is also favoured by the occurrence of Heaven and Earth as a divine pair in Ugaritic and Phoenician texts; see Baumgarten, 188. That the storm-god should be the son of Heaven is a natural enough idea; in Mesopotamia too Adad was considered the son of Anu.

²⁰ Th. 26–8. For the anaphora of 'we know' cf. p. 255.

himself and Trencsényi-Waldapfel in comparing the Mesopotamian and Hebrew traditions according to which lawgivers received their laws and prophets their prophecies in an encounter with a god, sometimes on a mountain.²¹ In certain instances it is emphasized that the man who was previously without the gift of words is suddenly granted eloquence by the deity with whom he has converse.²²

No less pertinent is the case of the Babylonian poet Kabti-ilani-Marduk, whose poem about the gods Erra and Ishum was revealed to him by one of them as he slept. Here are the lines in which he tells us so:

The composer of the tablet about him (Erra or Ishum) is Kabti-ilani-Marduk, son of Dabibu:
he revealed it to him in the night, and, just as he spoke it in his sleep,²³ he did not miss anything out,
did not add a single line to it.
Erra heard it and it found his approval,
the (matter) of Ishum his herald was pleasing to him;
all the gods gave praise with him.²⁴

The poem dates from perhaps a generation, perhaps a century or two, before Hesiod. Another instance of divine revelation is recorded in the colophon of a hymn to the goddess Šeru'a dated to the year 733 BC. The writer uses the same phrase as Kabti-ilani-Marduk: the goddess 'revealed these lines to him in the night'. Oppenheim remarks apropos of this that 'revelation of a poem in a dream seems to have become a topos'.²⁵ It does not seem to have been so, however, before the first millennium, and possibly not before the eighth century.

Hesiod does not represent his encounter with the Muses as a dream (though some people in later antiquity interpreted it in this way); but that is not essential to the comparison. His experience has the same pattern as many that are reported as dreams. He perceives divine visitors who address him with reproach and admonition. What is more, they leave him with a gift, the bay-branch sceptre; such generosity is often attributed to dream-visitants. Dodds writes of 'the occurrence in myth and pious legend of dreams which *prove* their objectivity by leaving a material token behind them, what our spiritualists like to call an

²¹ Dornseiff, 37 f., 76; I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Acta Orientalia Acad. Scient. Hung.* 5, 1955, 45–76; West (1966), 159 f. For lawgivers see above, pp. 135 f.; for prophets, especially Amos, below, p. 307.

²² Moses, Exod. 4. 10–12; Jeremiah, Jer. 1. 6–9.

²³ Others translate this clause 'when he recited it on waking'.

²⁴ Erra V 42–7, adduced by Walcott, 52, after Oppenheim (1956), 193 f.

²⁵ LKA 36; H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (AOAT 2, 1968), no. 290; Oppenheim (1977), 380 n. 48a.

"apport".²⁶ He refers to Bellerophon's dream in Pindar, in which the hero receives a golden bridle.²⁶

One further passage from the hymn to the Muses may be mentioned in passing. Hesiod says that if a king is granted the favour of the Muses,

upon his tongue they shed sweet dew,
and out of his mouth the words flow gentle.

The image in the first of these lines shows affinities with two passages of older Hebrew poetry. In a royal wedding hymn which may well be for Ahab of Israel (874–853), the king is told

You are the comeliest of the sons of man;
charm is poured on your lips.

As to how this poured charm is to be imagined, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy supplies the appropriate liquid symbol:

Let my persuasion trickle like the rain,
my speech drip down like the dew.²⁷

The Succession Myth: part I (Th. 116–210)

Hesiod's story begins with the cosmogony. This does not seem to be modelled on any notably oriental pattern, but certain details are of interest. First there is Chaos, which comes into being before anything else and which Hesiod conceives as a dark, gaping space, now located beneath the earth. The Titans in Tartarus are on the far side of it (Th. 814), and must have fallen through it, however long it took (cf. 740–3, where Hesiod uses the cognate word *khasma*). The word *khaos* is related to the verbs *khainō* and *khaskō*, 'gape, yawn', and the idea is perhaps related to the concept of the earth itself gaping open to swallow someone up so that he is never seen again, as in the Homeric expression *νῦν μοι χάνοι εὐρεῖα χθών*. In the Ugaritic Baal epic Death (Môt) is personified as a being who swallows people into his mighty throat, and in the Old Testament there are references to the earth 'opening its mouth' to swallow people up so that they go down to Sheol. In Isaiah it is Sheol itself that has 'opened its mouth'.²⁸

Gaia first gives birth to Ouranos, who is equal to herself, 'so that he should cover her all about' (127). The idea of the sky as a cover or roof

²⁶ Pind. *Ol.* 13. 68; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 106 with 123 n. 19. Cf. Oppenheim (1956), 192.

²⁷ Th. 83 f.; Ps. 45. 2(3), Deut. 32. 2. Cf. also pp. 229 f. on the notion of words flowing as smooth as honey.

²⁸ *KTU* 1. 4 vii 47 ff., viii 19 f., 5 : 6 f., ii 2–4; Num. 16. 30–3, Ps. 106. 17, cf. Gen. 4. 11, Exod. 15. 12; Isa. 5. 14. On Chaos see further West (1966), 192 f.

appears in *Enūma eliš* (IV 138), when Marduk cuts Tiamat in two: 'half of her he set up and (so) made the heavens as a roof'.²⁹

Immediately afterwards Gaia produces the Mountains. We might have expected these to be understood as already in existence as a part of her. Marduk, however, creates mountains from Tiamat's udder as a separate act. In the Book of Proverbs, too, they have their own place in the cosmogonic process (Wisdom speaks):

Ages ago I was woven together ...
Before the mountains were bedded in,
before the hills I was brought to birth;
before he had made the land and the fields
and the first dust of the earth.³⁰

Gaia then proceeds to mate with Ouranos. In Sumerian and Babylonian literature too Heaven and Earth appear as a male and female couple who enjoy fruitful intercourse; Burkert has cited some relevant texts. This is, however, a motif with a wide distribution, at least from West Africa to the Pacific, and as it does not appear to be an essential component of the Succession Myth, we should not assume that it was necessarily borrowed from the Near East. It may have established itself early among Indo-European peoples.³¹

The Titan children of Gaia and Ouranos include Oceanus and Tethys, whose possible oriental affinities have been discussed in chapter 3, and Iapetos, of whom something needs to be said here. If Kronos is Number One among the Titans, Iapetos is Number Two. These are the only two named as Titans in Homer. Iapetos is the father of several sons (Atlas, Menoitios, and Prometheus) who provoked and suffered from Zeus' violent antagonism. But what is he himself? What does he stand for? His name seems non-Greek—as are those of most Greek gods—and moreover strangely reminiscent of the biblical Japheth. The identification has been suggested since the Renaissance. So far as phonology goes, it seems perfectly plausible. The Greek form is *Iāpētós*. The Hebrew form is *Yépet*, pre-pausal *Yāpet*, which ought to go back to an earlier *Yaptu; in Phoenician we might expect *Yap(e)t. It is possible that the name might have been taken over in Greek as Iapet-os and that in hexameter verse the initial *i* was lengthened *metri gratia*. On the other hand, it is difficult to see any significant point of contact between the

²⁹ *En. el.* IV 138. The same verb (*gullulu*) is used in the Flood narrative of covering over the top and bottom of the boat (*Atr.* III 31).

³⁰ Th. 129; *En. el.* V 57; Prov. 8. 23–6. Cf. also Wensinck (as p. 150 n. 208), 2 f.; West (1966), 198.

³¹ Th. 133 ff.; Burkert (1992), 203 n. 20; E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 2nd ed., London 1873, i 142–8, ii 272 f.; J. G. Frazer, *Apollodorus. The Library*, Cambridge Mass. 1921, i 2 f.

Titan and the son of Noah.³² Until one is established, the equation must remain in doubt.

In comparing the *Enūma eliš* narrative with Hesiod's, I noted the shared motif that Ea and Kronos each take the initiative when the other gods are speechless with fear. Here are the relevant passages for comparison. In the Babylonian poem the context is that Apsu's and Mummu's plotting to destroy the younger gods has been reported to them.

The gods listened, and were disturbed,
they fell still, they sat down in silence.

The one excellent in understanding, the clever, the capable,
Ea the all-wise was seeking out their plans:
he fashioned himself a master design and perfected it,
he made it artful, his excellent pure spell.

He recited it and laid (him) to rest in the waters, etc.

In Hesiod Gaia has prepared the weapon with which Ouranos will be overcome, and invited her children to punish his oppressive cruelty.

So she spoke; but they were all seized by fear, and none of them
uttered. But taking courage, great Kronos, the crooked-schemer,
soon replied to his good mother.

'Mother, I would undertake and accomplish
this task, for I am not afraid of this unspeakable father
of ours. After all, he started it by his ugly behaviour.'³³

The castration of Ouranos in the *Theogony* represents the separation of Heaven and Earth, which have hitherto cloven together. Kumarbi's oral castration of Anu does not seem to have any such significance, and what Ea does to Apsu certainly does not. It may seem as though the Greek version of the Succession Myth has had an independent mythical theme attached to it at this point, a theme documented from many parts of the world.³⁴ It is curious, though, that the motif of the children compressed under the still unraised sky, which Hesiod shares with many of the separation myths, has such a clear analogy in the children enclosed in the still unseparated Apsu and Tiamat in *Enūma eliš*. It is also worthy of remark that the description of Apsu and Tiamat's united state at the beginning of the poem seems to point forward to a separation which never explicitly takes place. We should perhaps consider the possibility that the poet of *Enūma eliš*, which is after all not an old poem in

Babylonian terms, has taken over some motifs from a more ancient story of the separation of Heaven and Earth. This was a subject by no means foreign to Sumerian mythology, as we know from the introductions to certain poems.³⁵ In at least one other, Heaven appears as a being who penetrates Earth with his penis.³⁶ We could therefore imagine a Babylonian mythical narrative resembling the first part of Hesiod's story more closely than *Enūma eliš* does, with Heaven and Earth as the primeval parents.

An allusion in the *Song of Ullikummi* may provide an indirect echo of such an account. Ullikummi's feet are severed with the ancient copper *ardala*—a plural word, probably meaning a saw—'with which they cut apart heaven and earth'.³⁷ There was, then, some Hurrian myth in which heaven and earth were formerly united, and a separation was effected by certain gods using a toothed cutting tool. In Hesiod too a toothed tool is used: a δρέπανον (162) or ἄρηι καρχαρόδους (175), a sharp-toothed sickle.

Why a sickle? If Kronos was originally a harvest god, it was an appropriate implement for him. As Kumarbi was a cereal god, we can easily imagine that, if there was ever a myth that he separated Heaven from Earth, he too might have used a sickle for the job; only we have no evidence of such a myth. There are also other considerations to be taken into account. Firstly, Greek artists and poets put a similar weapon in the hands of Iolaus or Heracles as they fight the Hydra, of Perseus as he beheads Medusa, of a maenad attacking Orpheus, and of Zeus in conflict with Typhon. The artistic motif is of oriental provenance: gods attack their foes with a sickle in Babylonian and Assyrian art, and it is a common royal attribute in the Near East. Secondly, the use of the word *harpē* in Greek accounts may have been encouraged by its fortuitous similarity to the West Semitic word for 'sword', Ugaritic *hṛb*, Aramaic *harbā*, Hebrew *héreb*, if that was used in oriental myths which influenced the Greek.³⁸

From Ouranos' severed genitals comes Aphrodite. It was noted in chapter 1 that she is a goddess of clearly Levantine provenance, and that with her title Ourania she corresponds to the Phoenician 'Astart, Queen of Heaven. We can add here that her relationship to Ouranos as his

³⁵ Bottéro-Kramer, 189(?) 479, 503, 509.

³⁶ Bottéro-Kramer, 480; cf. 341 (*Lugal-e* 26), 682 (*Erra* I 28).

³⁷ *Ullikummi* III A iii 42, 52 f. (Hoffner, 59 § 61, 63).

³⁸ Cf. West (1966), 217 f.; Burkert (1992), 39, 85–7; Brown, 78–82. Brown cites Isa. 27, 1, where Yahweh wields a *héreb* against Leviathan, and refers also to the *harbōi šurim* of Josh. 5 2 f., the flint knives used for circumcision. One could well imagine a castration myth serving as the origin of circumcision ritual.

³² Cf. West (1966), 202 f.; Brown, 82 f.

³³ *En. el.* 157–63; *Th.* 167–72.

³⁴ W. Staudacher, *Die Trennung von Himmel und Erde*, Diss. Tübingen 1942 (repr. Darmstadt 1968), cf. A. Lesky, *Saeculum* 6, 1955, 42 = Heitsch, 585.

bodily daughter matches that of the Babylonian Ishtar to the personified Heaven, Anu.³⁹ The lines in which Hesiod defines her functions,

And this she has had allotted from the beginning
as her province among men and immortal gods:
the whisperings of girls, smiles, deceptions,
sweet pleasure, intimacy, and tenderness,

have a remarkable parallel in a Babylonian hymn to Ishtar composed nearly a thousand years earlier:

Of whisperings, yieldings, mutual love, feeling good,
of concord too she is the mistress.⁴⁰

Genealogies; the hymn to Hecate (Th. 211–452)

In the following genealogical sections there is little to detain us. I will just pick on one detail for comment

Among the children of Eris, Hesiod lists 'Oath, who does the most harm to men on earth, when anyone deliberately swears false'. He mentions this deified Oath again in the *Works and Days* as being born on the fifth of the month with the Erinyes in attendance. The oath can be treated as a divine power because it is a sort of curse which a man lays upon himself and which will punish him inexorably in the event of perjury. The concept is paralleled in Akkadian, as has been shown in an earlier chapter (p. 126). The most graphic description of this demonized Oath (the word for oath being preceded by the divine determinative) occurs in the *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*, where, as in Hesiod, it is associated with infernal powers. The narrator sees it among other hellish figures: 'Oath—head of a goat, hands (and) feet human'.⁴¹

In the extended section in praise of Hecate at 411–52 we find many stylistic features that recall the Babylonian and Assyrian hymns. Several passages from it were cited in the last chapter to illustrate hymnic idioms common to Greek and Semitic poetry. A couple of further comparisons may be added here. Hesiod makes statements to the effect that certain people pray to Hecate and she assists them.

Even now, whenever someone on earth,
sacrificing fine offerings, makes ritual propitiation,
he invokes Hecate, and great favour readily attends him.

³⁹ Walcot, 5 f.

⁴⁰ Th. 203–6; Ammi-ditana hymn, RA 22, 1925, 172, 17 f. (Foster, 66). Cf. also the Sumerian *Inanna and Enki* 60–2 (Bottéro–Kramer, 233), 'à la sainte Inanna, ma fille, je vais offrir ... l'Étendard, le Carquois; l'Érotisme; le Baiser-amoureux, la Prostitution et le "Vite-fait" (?)'

⁴¹ Th. 231 f., Op. 803 f.; CPLM no. 32 rev. 7.

To those too who till the surly grey,
and who pray to Hecate and the strong-thundering Shaker of Earth,
easily the proud goddess grants a large catch.

Similarly in Babylonian hymns:

The girl who names her (Ishtar) finds (in her?) a mother;
one speaks of her among the people, one calls upon her name.

The destitute and the widow call upon you, O lord:
you give a husband to those who lack ...

The man surrounded in battle
who is borne towards death and calls upon your name,
you have mercy (on him), O lord,
you spare him from rout.⁴²

Hesiod lists various categories of people whom Hecate benefits: kings in judgment, warriors, cavalrymen, athletes, sea fishermen, herdsmen, the young. The passage recalls the catalogue in the great Shamash Hymn:

To the capacity of his mouth the feeble one cries to you,
the humble, the weak, the oppressed, the subject,
the captive's mother is constantly before you;
he whose family is far away, whose city is distant,
[with] the produce of the steppe the shepherd comes before you,
the herdsman in troubled times, the pasturer amid enemies.
O Shamash, there comes before you the caravan, passing in fear,
the travelling merchant, the agent carrying his money-bag;
O Shamash, there comes before you the fisherman with his net,
the hunter, the beater who drives back the game,
the fowler with his net comes before you.
The roving brigand, the enemy of Shamash,
on the steppe paths the bandit comes before you.
The wandering dead, the vagrant soul
O Shamash, come before you: you hearken to them all.⁴³

Kronos' children and the stone (Th. 453–506)

Hesiod tells us that the stone which Kronos swallowed, the last of his 'children', was the first to be regurgitated. The implication is that the other children too came up in the reverse order to that in which they had

⁴² Th. 417–19, 440–2; Ammi-ditana hymn, RA 22, 1925, 172, 19 f. (Foster, 66); E. Ebeling, JDMG 69, 1915, 96 rev. 1 f. (Seux, 451; Foster, 608), E. Burrows, JRAS 1924 Centenary Supplement, 35 rev. 1 f. (Seux, 482; Foster, 634).

⁴³ Th. 429–47; Shamash hymn, BWL 134, lines 132–46 (Seux, 60; Foster, 541 f.).

been ingested. The first in the list of Rhea's offspring was Hestia (434) and in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* it is said explicitly that Hestia was Kronos' eldest child and again, by the will of Zeus, the youngest. Zeus himself, the last born, became the eldest; in the *Iliad*, at any rate, he is counted as older than Poseidon.⁴⁴ This goes with his being the gods' king. A Near Eastern ruler likes to be able to claim that he is the firstborn of his father. What is more, we find instances of the promotion of a younger or youngest son to the status of Firstborn. El tells Keret in the Ugaritic poem that he will have many sons and daughters, and 'I will make the youngest of them the firstborn'. Yahweh chose David, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, to be king of Israel, and declared 'I will make him the Firstborn, the High One for the kings of the earth'.⁴⁵

The stone was set up by Zeus at Pytho in the glens of Parnassus to be a monument and a thing of wonder for mortals (498–500). It was evidently a holy object to be seen at Delphi in Hesiod's time. It was still there in the time of Pausanias, who describes it as being of no great size and says that oil was poured on it daily and unspun wool put over it on festival days. Late sources say that the stone swallowed by Kronos was called the *baitylos* or *abaddir*.⁴⁶ These are both West Semitic words. The first represents a Phoenician or Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew *bêt 'ēl*, literally 'house of God (or El)', a name that is in fact associated with the cult of a stone. In Genesis we read the story of how Jacob, on his way from Beer-sheba to Harran, lay down to sleep with a stone for his pillow and saw in a dream the staircase leading up to heaven, with Yahweh standing at the top. On waking he declared, 'This is none other than the house of God', set his pillow-stone up on end, poured oil on it, and named the place Bêt-'ēl (the Bethel of English versions), saying that the stone was to be God's house. This is clearly the foundation legend of a cult in which a holy stone had oil poured on it, as at Delphi.⁴⁷ No doubt there were other such cults in Syria and Palestine where the same appellation was given to the stones.⁴⁸ The other word, *abaddir*, looks like a Semitic *'ab 'addir* 'mighty father', or perhaps *'aban dīr* 'stone of dīr' (only it is not clear what *dīr* would mean). In any case its Semitic

⁴⁴ Th. 497; *Hymn. Aphr.* 22 f.; Il. 13. 355, 15. 166, 182.

⁴⁵ KTU 1. 15 iv 16; Ps. 89. 28, cf. 1 Sam. 16. 1–13; G. Widengren in Hooke, 174 f.

⁴⁶ Paus. 10. 24. 6; *baitylos*: sch. Arat. 30–3, *Lex. Rhei.* 224. 10 Bekker, Hesych., *Et. Gen. Magn. / Syn. s.v.*, Theognost. 21. 9 (Hdn. i. 163. 17 Lentz), Apostol. 9. 24 (*Paroem. Gr.* ii. 468); *abaddir*: Prisc. Inst. 7. 32, cf. 2. 6, 5. 18, 6. 45, Mythogr. Vat. 1. 104. 3. 15. 10.

⁴⁷ Gen. 28. 10–22, cf. 35. 6–15; Brown, 337; above, p. 35.

⁴⁸ Philo-Sanchuniathon, besides mentioning the divine Baitylos among the sons of Ouranos, speaks of Ouranos devising *baitylia*, described as 'live stones' (λίθοι ἐμψυχοί), as a weapon against Kronos (*FGH Hist.* 790 F 2. 23). Applied to magical stones with the power of motion, the word is also found in Pliny, *NH* 37. 135, and Damascius, *Vita Isidori* 94, 203 (seen at Heliopolis in Syria).

provenance is confirmed by Augustine's mention of *Abaddires* as Punic *baitylos*.⁴⁹ It must be emphasized that there is no reason to suppose that the stone at Delphi was identified as a *baitylos* or *abaddir* before the Hellenistic or Roman period. The significant thing is that people familiar with the Semitic cults did eventually recognize the old Delphic stone as qualifying for those names.

At the end of this section Hesiod records that Zeus released the Cyclopes from bondage and that in gratitude they gave him the thunder and lightning, weapons of their own manufacture, which form the basis of his power. He was to use them in the Titanomachy. The motif that the god requires special weapons, which are supplied to him by a divine craftsman, is paralleled, as Walcot has pointed out, in the Baal epic. In his conflict with Yammu, Baal at first has the worst of it, but then Kothar provides him with two special throwing-clubs, and with these he is victorious.⁵⁰

Cyclopes' children (Th. 507–616)

Cyclopes has four sons: Atlas, Menoitios, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. Epimetheus is merely the foil to Prometheus. The other three are all treated by Zeus as enemies and incapacitated in different ways. Can we relate them to the oriental myths?

Of Menoitios we can say nothing useful, since Hesiod tells us only that he was arrogant and lawless and that Zeus blasted him to Erebus with a thunderbolt because of his wickedness and overbearing strength. As for Prometheus, he appears as one who helps mankind to gain advantages and avoid hardships against Zeus' will: this shows the god in a role analogous to that of the crafty Ea in the Babylonian Flood narrative. In the fifth century, when we get a Greek Flood myth, Prometheus appears to have had a similar part in it, and to have been further assimilated to Ea in other ways.⁵¹ The Hesiodic Prometheus, however, shows no features that we can definitely relate to the Babylonian god.

Of Atlas, again, Hesiod says only that he was 'stern of heart', and that Zeus made him stand at the ends of the earth supporting the sky on his head and hands. In his case we can perhaps discern traces of connections with the Hurro-Hittite mythology. The description of him in

⁴⁹ *Epist.* 17. 2. Cf. W. Gesenius, *Scripturae Linguaeque Phoeniciae Monumenta quotquot impersant*, Leipzig 1837, 384. To the references in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v. should be added a dedication from Mauretania, *CIL* viii. 21481 *Abaddiri sancto cultores iuniores suis sumis aram constituerunt pro u...*

⁵⁰ Th. 501–6, cf. 141; KTU 1. 2 iv; Walcot, 31.

⁵¹ See S. West, *Mus. Helv.* 51, 1994, 129–49. For the Greek Flood myth see below, chapter 9.

the *Odyssey*, where he is a baleful (ὄλοόφρων) character who knows the depths of the entire sea and holds the tall pillars which keep earth and heaven apart, has been compared with the position of the giant Ubelluri in the *Song of Ullikummi*.⁵² But if we also take into account his identification with the African mountain which is itself 'the pillar of heaven',⁵³ we may be reminded of the stone ogre Ullikummi who grows up heaven-high from Ubelluri's shoulder, discommoding the gods. If we can suppose that there was once a myth in which Atlas was an Ullikummi-like figure who grew up from the sea to threaten the gods, this may provide an explanation of the various forms that the traditions about him take. His ultimate fate, of course, is very different from that of Ullikummi, who is felled.

Ullikummi is one of several individual adversaries who threaten to supplant Teššub in the Hittite narratives (see p. 104). Possibly Iapeton's family represents a parallel set, grouped together for tidiness under one father.

The theomachy (Th. 617–717)

In his descriptions of the younger gods' battle with the Titans and of Zeus' against Typhoeus, Hesiod makes use of several motifs which are at home in oriental theomachies. Filled with fury, Zeus comes from Olympus:

with continuous lightning flashes he went, and the bolts
flew thick and fast amid thunder and lightning
from his stalwart hand, trailing holy flames.
All around, the life-bearing earth rumbled
as it burned, and the vast woodlands crackled loudly on every side.
The whole land was seething, and the streams of Oceanus,
and the undraining sea. The hot blast enveloped
the chthonic Titans; the indescribable flame reached the divine
sky, and even the strongest eyes were blinded
by the sparkling flare of the thunderbolt and lightning.

In the Typhoeus battle too Zeus' thunderbolts produce effects on a cosmic scale. Earth, sky, sea, and Chaos resound fearsomely; Olympus quakes and the earth groans under Zeus' tread; land, sea, and sky seethe, and the waves surge about the headlands.

Compare accounts of Yahweh's fury:

...] and as El broke forth, the mountains melted [...]

⁵² See above, p. 149.

⁵³ Ibid.

God will come from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Pa'ran,
his majesty covering the heavens, and the earth full of his praise.
His brightness will be like light, the rays from his hand.

The clouds burst water, the skies gave voice,
while thy arrows went this way and that.
The sound of thy thunder was in the whirlwind, the lightnings lit
up the world;
the earth quaked and shook.

Fire goes before him, and scorches his enemies round about.
His lightnings light up the world: the earth sees, and writhes.
The mountains melt like wax from before Yahweh,
from before the lord of all the earth.

Of Erra too we read that when he clashes his weapons, the mountains quake and the seas surge.⁵⁴

When Zeus' allies the Hundred-Handers bombard the Titans with a great volley of rocks, they 'overshade' them (κατὰ δ' ἐσκίασαν); that is, the hail of missiles is so dense as to darken their sky. The motif recurs from time to time in later Classical literature, and is paralleled in the *Mahābhārata*. The oldest example known to me, however, comes in a fragment of a Babylonian historical epic relating to the Kassite period:

] he/we arrayed; arrows shot out at the enemy.
] returned, one could not see another,
] could not see his [], friend could not discern his
companion.
[As with a swarm] of locusts the face of heaven was filled.
] the Elamite retreated.⁵⁵

The gods imprisoned below (Th. 717–819)

The Titans are bound in Tartarus, far below the earth. The first words that Hesiod uses to describe the place, 'round it a bronze barrier is driven, and three layers of night are poured about its neck', might suggest the image of a great metal vessel, a larger version of the 'bronze jar' in which Ares is said to have been bound for thirteen months.⁵⁶ We recall the Hittite ritual text that was quoted in an earlier chapter:

⁵⁴ Th. 687–99, cf. 839 ff.; ninth-century inscription from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (J. Renz, *Die althebräischen Inschriften* i, Darmstadt 1995, 59); Hab. 3. 3 f., Ps. 77. 18(17) f., 97. 3–5 (Bogan, 416); cf. Ps. 18. 8(7) ff., Isa. 64. 1–3, Mic. 1. 3 f., Nah. 1. 3 ff.; J. Jeremias, *Theophanie. Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1965; Erra IIIc 66 f.

⁵⁵ Th. 716, cf. [Aesch.] fr. 199. 8, Hdt. 7. 226, Lucr. 2. 628; V. Pisani, *ZDMG* 103, 1953, 135 f. R. Schmitt (ed.), *Indogermanische Dichtersprache* (*Wege der Forschung*, 165), Darmstadt 1968, 166 f.; BM 35322 (Grayson [1975b], 47–55), obv. 13–17.

⁵⁶ So W. Aly, *Hesiods Theogonie*, Heidelberg 1913, 47; cf. Walcott, 61.

Let it (Telibinu's anger) go the road of the Sun-god of the earth. The doorkeeper has opened the seven doors, drawn back the seven bolts. Down in the Dark Earth bronze cauldrons stand ... What goes in does not come out again; it perishes therein.⁵⁷

A few lines later, however, Hesiod speaks of bronze doors or gates fitted by Poseidon, with a wall built up to them on each side. These gates too have a Hittite parallel. In a ritual text which involves summoning the aid of the Former Gods, the invocation begins:

Behold, I, a son of man, have come ... to the river banks to call upon the Former Gods. May the Sun-goddess of the Earth open the great-gates and allow up the Former Gods, the lords of the earth.

In the bilingual Hurro-Hittite *Song of Emancipation* this goddess holds a banquet 'at the bolts of the earth', meaning presumably bolted gates.⁵⁸

The Hittite 'Former Gods' (*karuilies siunes*) correspond quite closely to the Titans, of whom Hesiod uses the same expression, 'the former gods', πρότεροι θεοί (424, 486). They dwell in the underworld and are shut in there by gates which it is not in their own power to open. They were put there by Teššub, as appears from a later passage of the same ritual text:

When the Storm-god drove you down to the Dark Earth, he established this sacrificial offering for you.⁵⁹

Their number and their individual names vary in different texts. They may be seven or nine, but most often they are twelve, the same number as the Titans. Sometimes they come in assonant pairs—Muntara and Mutmuntara, Eltara and Taistara, Nara and Napsara, Minki and Amunki, Iyandu and Apandu—which is also a feature of Hesiod's list (Koios and Kreios, Theia and Rheia). They include some married couples, besides the old kings of the Succession Myth, Alalu, Anu, and Kumarbi; in the preamble to the *Song of [Kumarbi]*, where that myth is related, it is the Former Gods who are invited to listen. For the most part their names appear archaic, and either Mesopotamian or Hurrian, and it is in Hurrian contexts that they regularly appear. In Hurrian they are called *enna durenna*, 'gods of down under'.⁶⁰

They were identified with the Mesopotamian Anunnaki.⁶¹ This term (*Anunna*, *Anunnakkū*) was originally used as a general word for the gods, the children of Anu, but later they tended to be contrasted with the *Igigi* as the gods of earth and underworld as against those of heaven. In *Enlilima eliš* it is Marduk who divides the six hundred gods between heaven and the lower world, and some later texts speak more explicitly of his confining the Anunnaki below the earth, as well as settling his father Ea down in the Apsu.⁶² There are various scattered allusions to collectivities of Dead Gods (*Dingiruggū*), Banished Gods (*ilāni darsūti*), Defeated (or Bound) Gods (*ilāni kamūti*), etc.; we hear of seven (or eight) sons of Enmešarra whom Anu bound in the underworld before he put himself bound by Marduk, and who, according to one tradition, were ruled by Dagan.⁶³ Dagan, as we have seen, corresponds to Kumarbi and Kronos. According to a Seleucid ritual text,⁶⁴ the Dead Gods in the underworld are under the watch of Shamash, the Sun, as in the Hittite invocation it is the Sun-goddess of the Earth who has the power to let them out. Perhaps this has something to do with the presence among Hesiod's Titans of Hyperion, who is the father of Helios and whose name may also augment or stand for that of Helios.

In his tour of the underworld Hesiod describes the house of Night,

where Night and Day approach
and greet each other as they cross the great threshold
of bronze: one goes in as the other comes out,
and the house never holds them both inside,
but always there is one of them outside the house
ranging the earth, while the other inside the house
waits until the time comes for her to go.

In my commentary I compared with this picturesque personalization of the alternation of night and day two passages from hymns of the *Rgveda*. But there are analogies in Semitic poetry too. In a Babylonian incantation two daughters of Anu are invoked as healers:

Two are they, the daughters of Anu;
between them a wall has been built:
sister goes not to sister.

This seems to be a sort of riddle, to which 'Night and Day' is a plausible solution. I have elsewhere quoted the Ugaritic myth in which Dawn and

⁵⁷ Th. 726 f., II. 5. 387; above, p. 153; cf. Walcott, 61; J. Harmatta, *Acta Antiqua* 16, 1968, 61–3; Penglass, 210.

⁵⁸ Th. 732 f. (a variant has πόλεις 'gates' for θύρας 'doors'); H. Otten, *ZA* 54, 1961, 120 f., 42–8; E. Neu, *Abh. Mainz* 1988(3), 25 f.

⁵⁹ Otten, op. cit., 132/3, iii 36–8.

⁶⁰ Forrer (as n. 5), 697–700; V. Haas, *Or. N.S.* 45, 1976, 207 f.; cf. Gurney (1977), 15.

⁶¹ Otten, op. cit., 115, 157; Haas, op. cit., 207 f.

⁶² *En. el.* VI 39–44; above, p. 139.

⁶³ Ebeling (1931), 38 no. 8; W. G. Lambert in *Alster*, 65; Burkert (1992), 203 n. 24.

⁶⁴ *XV. vorläufiger Bericht über die ... Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka*, Berlin 1959, 36. 9.

Dusk are portrayed as the sons of two wives of El who rise up alternately over a basin.⁶⁵

Also located in the underworld is the residence of Styx, eldest daughter of Oceanus. In an unusual and difficult piece of topographical description, Hesiod states that Styx falls from a high cliff and flows far below the earth. She is a branch of Oceanus, and her share is 'a tenth part':

nine parts Oceanus round the earth and the sea's broad back
winds with his silver eddies, and falls into the brine,
while that one issues forth from the cliff.

It is not clear what form the other nine 'parts' or 'portions' of Oceanus take, but it seems worth noting references in a Hittite ritual text to a god's going down to the underworld 'to the strand of the nine seas', and being summoned back 'from the bank of the nine rivers'.⁶⁶

Typhoeus (Th. 820–80)

The essence of the Typhoeus episode is as follows: a monstrous creature previously unheard of, is born from Earth and Tartarus and grows great threatening Zeus' power; there is a battle between the two of them, and Zeus, using his storm weapons, which include not only the usual thunder and lightning but also tornadoes (*πρηστῆρες ἀνεμοί*), overwhelms his opponent and destroys him. Typhoeus himself is some sort of storm-demon: although consigned to Tartarus, he is the source of wild, destructive winds.

In scholarly discussions of the Succession Myth the story of Ullikummi in the Hurro-Hittite tradition has often been seen as the primary parallel to the Typhoeus episode. Since the Ullikummi story showed Teššub as the god in power and Kumarbi as his enemy, it was seen as a sequel to the events narrated in the *Song of [Kumarbi]*, just as the Typhoeus episode is a sequel to Zeus' overthrow of Kronos. However, the two Hittite texts are separate compositions, they do not allude to one another, and we do not know that anyone thought of them as belonging together in sequence. Ullikummi is only one of several interlopers who threaten to displace Teššub and fail.⁶⁷

The fact is that the Typhoeus episode does not fit very well into the structure of the Succession Myth and need not be regarded as an organic part of it. Rather it is a separate, self-contained story drawn from the

⁶⁵ Th. 748–54; B. Landsberger and T. Jacobsen, *JNES* 14, 1955, 16 (Foster, 853); above, p. 146.

⁶⁶ Th. 786–92. *KUB xxxvi* 89 rev. 4 f., 21 f. (V. Haas, *Der Kult von Nerik*, Rome 1970, 150, 152; *CTH* 671).

⁶⁷ See pp. 103 f.

the general area of tradition. As such, it may be compared with several oriental myths. Mesopotamian and Canaanite parallels are at least as important as the Hurro-Hittite.

The Sumerian poem *Lugal-e*⁶⁸ tells of Ninurta's defeat of the terrible god. The salient points are that the Azag is born of Earth and Heaven; he grows mighty, and aspires to Ninurta's kingship (34–6, 48–56); he is portrayed as a storm-god whose weapons include tempestuous winds and flood (8 f., 76–95, 229, 235, 283, 288–301). There are other details that recall Hesiod: the Azag hisses like a serpent (175, cf. Th. 820), and both combatants set the landscape on fire (86, 178–80, cf. Th. 811 f., 859–67).

The Akkadian *Anzu* epic has a similar theme. Ninurta (or Ninġirsu) is again the hero. His opponent Anzu is a monstrous bird, who causes whirlwinds by flapping his great wings. Earth and floodwaters bring him to birth in a distant mountain. Enlil appoints him doorkeeper of his palace, but while he is bathing, Anzu seizes the opportunity to make off with the Tablet of Destinies and thus the royal power. Ninurta fights him with storm-weapons (II 30–4):

The Lord m[arsh]all[ed] the Seven of Battle,
the warrior marshalled the seven tempests,
those that sport in the dust, the seven whirlwinds;
he raised a battle array, summoned a terrifying formation;
the wind-blasts attended for battle at his side.⁶⁹

Anzu roars like a lion (II 38), which is also one of Typhoeus' accomplishments (833). Ninurta eventually kills him with an arrow on his mountain, with which the creature is somehow identified; there is a reference to Ninurta's slaying the mountains and flaying them even as he floods them (III 17 f., 36), his overpowering rainstorm being evidently imagined as a lash that flays the ground beneath. This is precisely reproduced in Homer's lines about Typhoeus, where it is explicit that Zeus' victory over Typhoeus is a recurrent natural phenomenon:

The earth groaned beneath them as under Zeus whose sport is thunder
in his anger, when he lashes the earth over Typhoeus
among the Arimoi, where they say Typhoeus has his couch.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ J. Van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LAM-BI NIR-ĜAL*, Leiden 1983; Jacobsen, 233–72; Bottéro-Kramer, 339–77; new fragments in F. N. H. Al-Rawi and A. R. George, *Iraq* 57, 1995, 199–223. The composition goes back to the late third millennium; it was later provided with an Akkadian translation, and remained popular until the Seleucid period, as is shown by the large number of copies.

⁶⁹ In a hymn dating from the second millennium the storm-god Adad is celebrated as the one who strikes Anzu with his lightning bolts (Ebeling (1953), 96 no. 20. 13; Seux, 305; Foster, 545).

⁷⁰ Il. 2. 781–3. Hesiod too in another context (304) has the location 'among the Arimoi'; on the

Anzu appears to have been an influential model for *Enūma eliš*. Marduk's conflict with Tiamat is narrated with the use of motifs that echo Ninurta's conflict with Anzu. He equips himself with fierce winds for the combat, and they play a decisive part in his victory. It is interesting that in listing Marduk's winds the poet distinguishes between the regular four (South Wind, North Wind, East Wind, West Wind), which are the gift of Anu, and a further group of wild, irregular winds that the god creates for himself. Hesiod makes a similar distinction except that he makes the wild winds emanate from Typhoeus, as opposed to the good ones, Notos, Boreas, and Zephyros, which are of divine birth.⁷¹

Tiamat is the Sea, and the myth of her subjection by a storm-god can hardly be native to Babylonia. It is related to the Canaanite myths of Baal's conflict with Yammu and Yahweh's with Rahab or Leviathan.⁷² As we have noted earlier,⁷³ in these myths the sea's fury is embodied in a seven-headed serpent or dragon. This makes a taxonomic link with Typhoeus, the monster with a hundred serpent heads. It is his heads, like Leviathan's, that bear the brunt of the storm-god's violence: Zeus 'scorched all the heads of the dreadful monster on every side', and Yahweh 'broke the serpent heads on the waters, smashed up the heads of Leviathan'.⁷⁴ Certainly Typhoeus does not represent the sea; but the detail that in the battle with him 'the long waves raged about the headlands on every side' (848) may reflect the influence of a narrative about the defeat of a monster that did represent the sea. And the wild winds that come from Typhoeus are described mainly in relation to the sea (872-7).

Some of the motifs that Hesiod uses in this section have been touched on in connection with the earlier passage describing the war of the Titans. There still remain a couple worthy of comment. Firstly, we read that at the noise of the battle Hades himself trembled, and so did the Titans down in Tartarus. We may compare a passage of the *Erra* epic where Marduk recalls how he once rose up in his wrath and sent the Flood upon the earth: the heavens trembled, the stars changed their

meaning of the name see West (1966), 250 f. For the form *Armi* 'Aramaean' in Assyrian texts see E. F. Weidner, *Afo* 3, 1926, 156 n. 3; K. Nashel, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der mittelbabylonischen und mittelassyrischen Zeit* (Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes, 5), Wiesbaden 1982, 35.

⁷¹ *En. el.* IV 42-8, 96-100; *Th.* 869-80.

⁷² T. Jacobsen, *JAOS* 88, 1968, 104-8; J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea. Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, Cambridge 1985. Yammu, at least, exercises a kingship, and on his death Baal becomes king (*KTU* 1.2 iv 32, 'Yammu is dead: Baal shall be king!').

⁷³ See pp. 86, 97.

⁷⁴ *Th.* 855 f.; *Ps.* 74, 13 f.

stations, and the nether world quaked.⁷⁵ Secondly, when Zeus' thunderbolts overwhelm Typhoeus, a great tract of land is set on fire,

and it was melting like tin
that is heated by craftsmen's skill in crucibles,
or as iron, which is the strongest element,
when in the mountain glens it is tamed with fire,
melts in the holy earth by Hephaestus' craft.

The unusual simile is matched in Ezekiel, where again it has reference to God's fiery wrath:

As in the gathering of silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace for the blowing of fire upon it to melt it, so in my anger and wrath will I gather and melt you. And I will collect you and blow upon you with the fire of my rage, and you shall be melted within it. As is the melting of silver within a furnace, so shall you be melted within it.⁷⁶

'Typhoeus' name—with its variants Typhaon and later Typhon or Typhos—has sometimes been connected with the Ugaritic Špn, Phoenician Šapōn. This was the name of Baal's holy mountain, identified as the Djebel el Aqra' to the north of Ugarit, the classical Mt. Kasios. There is evidence that it was itself treated as divine, and its proprietor had a distinct identity as Ba'al Šapōn. He appears in an Ugaritic god-list, with the Akkadian equivalent 'Storm-god of Mount Hazzi'. In a treaty of Esarhaddon Baal-Šapunu is one of three Baals who are adjured to send tempests upon the ships of Tyre if the treaty is violated.⁷⁷ Here, then, we have a divinity with a name which might indeed have become 'Typhon' in Greek (though the older forms are harder to derive from it), and with a power similar to that of the Hesiodic figure, that of causing storms at sea. The obvious objection to the equation is that we should expect this Baal to be identified with Zeus, the victorious storm-god, not with his victim; indeed, he was later identified as Zeus Kasios. The objection might be met if there was once a myth that Baal had fought the mountain Šapōn, or a monster Šapōn whom he had confined under the mountain.⁷⁸

Certainly Mt. Kasios plays a part in a later version of the Zeus-Typhon encounter, as does the Corycian cave in Cilicia. Greeks in the East readily identified more than one foreign demon as Typhon, with the

⁷⁵ *Th.* 850-2; *Erra* I 135. See also below, chapter 7, on *Il.* 20, 61-6.

⁷⁶ *Th.* 862-6; *Ezek.* 22, 20-2.

⁷⁷ On all this see Caquot-Szmyer, 80-3 with literature; Brown, 98-105.

⁷⁸ Cf. G. Zuntz, *Mus. Helv.* 8, 1951, 25-34; Brown, 103.

result that new oriental motifs appear in different versions of his story. Hecataeus identified him with the Egyptian Seth, and the Egyptian motif of the gods' metamorphosis into different animals in their haste to escape from him was incorporated by Pindar in a narrative which probably combined his birth in the Corycian cave with his final pinning under Etna. Xanthus of Sardis, perhaps having regard to some local West Anatolian myth, located the fallen Typhon in the Lydian Kuku-kekaumene. In the theogony ascribed to Epimenides, if Diels's brilliant supplementation of a fragmentary piece of Philodemus is right in principle, as it seems to be (though it is flawed in detail), Typhon occupied Zeus' palace while he was asleep: the motif reminds us very much of Anzu's seizure of Enlil's kingship while the latter was bathing. In a probably Hellenistic account followed by Apollodorus, Zeus pursues Typhon to Mt. Kasios and grapples with him there but is overcome; Typhon cuts the sinews from his hands and feet, and carries him off to the Corycian cave. Hermes and Argipan manage to recover the sinews, which are in the custody of a female dragon, and reinsert them in Zeus' limbs, restoring his strength. Zeus then renews the attack and achieves victory. This story introduces a motif known from the Hittite myth of the serpent who overcame the Storm-god and removed his heart and eyes. His son marries the serpent's daughter, and through her he is able to get hold of his father's heart and eyes and give them back to him. The Storm-god then engages the serpent in battle and kills him.⁷⁹

Zeus the king (Th. 881–929)

On becoming king of the gods, Zeus assigns them their functions and privileges (885). We saw at the beginning of chapter 3 that this corresponds to an old Sumerian and Babylonian idea. In an earlier passage of the *Theogony* (390–6) Hesiod says that in allocating privileges Zeus rewarded, in accordance with a prior promise, all those gods who fought on his side against the Titans. We may compare the lengthy section of *Lugal-e* (416–647) in which Ninurta, having defeated the Azag, passes judgment on all the different stones and assigns destinies to them, favourably or otherwise, according to whether they had assisted the Azag in its rebellion or shown proper respect for himself.

⁷⁹ Hecatt. *FGHHist* 1 F 300, cf. Aesch. *Supp.* 560 with Johansen–Whittle; Pind. fr. 91, cf. 92–3, *Ol.* 4. 6 f., *Pyth.* 1. 15 ff.; Xanthus *FGHHist* 765 F 13; Epimenides *FGHHist* 457 F 8 (DK 3 B 8); Philod. *De Pietate* p. 85 Schober; Apollod. 1. 6. 3; story of Illuyanka (*CTH* 321; G. Beckman, *JANES* 14, 1982, 12–18, Hoffner, 13); cf. F. Vian (as ch. 3, n. 85), 17–37; West (1966), 391 f.; Burkert (1979), 7–9.

The first to pledge allegiance to Zeus had been Styx with her children Zelos, Nike, Kratos, and Bie. Their reward was that Styx became the great oath of the gods, while her children were adopted by Zeus as his inseparable companions, meaning that Glory, Victory, Power, and Strength are in his sole control. The idea corresponds to that in the prayer which a late writer puts in David's mouth: 'Thine, Yahweh, is the greatness and the might and the glory and the permanence and the majesty ... In thy hand are strength and might'.⁸⁰

Hesiod does not say that those powers are in Zeus' hand but that they always go about in his company and sit at his side. The same honorific position of being seated beside Zeus is ascribed by other poets to Dike, Themis, Aidos, the Moirai, etc. Similarly in a Neo-Babylonian prayer to Shamash, 'Right, Justice, and (the divine) Judge' are called 'the gods who sit in your presence'. This dates only from the sixth century, but already in the Old Babylonian period a poet could represent abstract qualities as walking beside a deity:

There walk ever at her side Truthfulness,
[We]ll-being, Vigour, Propriety,
[Full]ness of well-being and of life.

This kind of language can be found also in Hebrew poetry:

Righteousness and Justice are the station of thy throne;
Fidelity and Truth go before thee.⁸¹

Hesiod has another way of expressing the relationship of Righteousness and Justice to Zeus: he represents Eunomia and Dike, together with Eirene (Peace), as Zeus' daughters. Genealogy is, indeed, the most typically Hesiodic way of expressing relationships, employed throughout the *Theogony*. But this too is paralleled in earlier Mesopotamian hymnic language. In a prayer to Shamash employed in royal ritual, the god is addressed as

Attentive, knowing one, father-engenderer of Right and Justice.

For the association of Eunomia, Dike, and Eirene, Isaiah provides an apt parallel:

And Justice will be dwelling in the steppe,
and Righteousness will sit in the plantation;
and the produce of the righteousness will be Peace.⁸²

⁸⁰ Th. 383–403; 1 Chr. 29. 11.

⁸¹ West (1978), 221 (for the Moirai see *PMG* 1018); Langdon, 260. 29 (Seux, 520), Nanaya hymn of Samsu-iluna, 9–11; Ps. 89. 15(14).

⁸² Th. 900 f., cf. *Op.* 256; J. S. Cooper, *ZA* 62, 1972, 70. 4 (Seux, 220); Isa. 32. 16 f.

The *Works and Days* is a poem of exhortation and instruction, moral, ethical, and practical. In the first two or three hundred lines Hesiod addresses, by turns, his brother Perses, who is said to have bribed the 'kings' and so cheated the poet of part of his rightful inheritance, and these 'kings' themselves; both parties are spoken to in reproving terms and urged to deal righteously in future, and upon Perses the virtues of industry are also impressed. Admonition is fortified with myth, fable, and theology. The kings then fade out of the picture, while Perses remains as the recipient of advice on agriculture and seafaring. Eventually he too disappears from view as Hesiod continues to offer miscellaneous recommendations concerning conduct towards the gods and in various social contexts, and lore about lucky and unlucky days of the month.

Many peoples have 'wisdom literature' of some kind. Hesiod's poem, however, shows particular affinities with the long-established wisdom traditions of the Near East. Besides the Mesopotamian and Hebrew traditions which have been briefly described on pp. 76-8 and 94 f. respectively, there is an extensive Egyptian tradition from the time of the Middle Kingdom, which may have arisen under Semitic influence.⁸³ We must also take into account the story of Ahiqar, vizier to Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, first attested in an Aramaic papyrus of the fifth century BC found at Elephantine in Upper Egypt, and represented by various later recensions in Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, and other languages. In it Ahiqar addresses a long series of precepts to his nephew Nadin.⁸⁴ That the advice is directed towards a close relative (normally a son) is a common feature of the Near Eastern wisdom texts. The other standard type is that in which it is directed towards a king (generally by his vizier). In addressing both his brother and 'kings', therefore, Hesiod combines the two traditional Near Eastern patterns.⁸⁵

⁸³ See West (1978), 8-13.

⁸⁴ A. Cowley (as ch. 1, n. 95), 204-48; J. Rendel Harris, Agnes S. Lewis, and F. C. Conybeare in R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ii, 715-84; ANET, 427-30; West (1978), 13; J. M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, Baltimore 1983; B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents* iii, Jerusalem 1993, 24-57; E. Schlüter, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*, new Eng. ed. rev. G. Vermes et al., iii/1, Edinburgh 1986, 232-9; J. C. Greenfield in J. Day et al. (as ch. 2, n. 76), 43-52.

⁸⁵ His 'kings' are obviously rulers on a very parochial scale; it might be more realistic to describe them as the local squires. It may well be that Hesiod's word βασιλῆες is a poetic substitute for whatever name they were actually known by. It is, however, appropriate to the genre in which he is writing, and for purposes of literary comparison it makes sense to stick to 'kings'.

More distinctively Near Eastern is the motif that the addressees have given cause for complaint, so that the instruction contains an element of reproof and remonstrance. It may just be that the addressee is a delinquent, leading a dissolute life and in need of correction, or it may be that the speaker has suffered injustice from him and is indignant on his own account. The first case is exemplified by the Sumerian dialogue known as *The Father and his Misguided Son* and by certain Egyptian school texts; the second by two other Egyptian texts, the *Complaints of the Peasant* and the *Instructions of Ankhsheshonq*, and by Ahiqar, all of which have narrative frameworks.⁸⁶ Here again Hesiod combines both types. He represents his brother on the one hand as an idler and sponger who loiters about the courts listening to disputes instead of looking after his affairs, and on the other as having defrauded Hesiod himself with the kings' support.

The theme of justice has a natural place in admonitions addressed to kings. But on what basis can it be recommended as being in the ruler's own interest? Principally on the basis that the gods will be angry with him and his land if he does not rule justly. He who ventures to preach to kings, therefore, must claim knowledge of the gods' preferences; he must adopt the role of some kind of prophet. Hesiod does strike a prophetic tone in his warnings to the kings, and sometimes elsewhere, as in his prognostications about the end of the Race of Iron. These parts of his work have often reminded readers of the Hebrew prophets who were active a little before, during, and after his time. He has been compared in particular with Amos.⁸⁷ Amos too was a herdsman who received a divine call amid his flock (7. 14 f.):

A shepherd am I and a dresser of sycamores, and Yahweh took me from behind the sheep; and Yahweh said to me, 'Go and prophesy to my people Israel.'

He too rails against unscrupulous plutocrats who take bribes and oppress the righteous (5. 12); he too associates justice with God, and warns that injustice and wickedness will be punished by calamity.

The agricultural precepts represent a quite different element in Hesiod's poem. The literature of the Near East has much less to offer for comparison here, but the Sumerian agricultural handbook⁸⁸ shows that the genre was not unknown to Mesopotamian tradition.

⁸⁶ See West (1978), 11-13.

⁸⁷ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Antigonos von Karystos*, Berlin 1881, 314 f., and *Reden und Vorträge*, 4. Aufl., Berlin 1925, i, 116 f.; Chadwick and Chadwick, (as ch. 1, n. 129), ii, 724 f.; M. E. Andrews, *Journal of Religion* 23, 1943, 194-205; K. Seybold and J. von Ungern-Sternberg in Raaflaub (as ch. 1, n. 122), 215-39, who cite other literature.

⁸⁸ Above, p. 77; compared by Walcot, 93-6.

Let us now go through the poem, taking a closer look at some of its constituent parts and some smaller details.

The poem and the mise en scène (Op. 1–41)

Like the *Theogony*, the *Works and Days* begins with a hymn, in this case a short one to Zeus. Most of it has a somewhat biblical ring. Lines 5–11,

easily he makes strong, and easily he oppresses the strong,
easily he diminishes the conspicuous and magnifies the inconspicuous.

were quoted in the last chapter as an example of the typically Semitic hymnic motif that the god can do opposite things, and specifically that he can raise up or cast down. Structurally, too, they recall the parallelism of Semitic verse. The next line,

ρεῖα δέ τ' ἰθύνει σκολιὸν καὶ ἀγήνορα κάρφει,

easily he makes the crooked straight and withers the proud,

will readily call to mind the words of Deutero-Isaiah as they appear in the Authorized Version, 'and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain'.⁸⁹ However, that rendering is truer to the Septuagint (καὶ ἔσται πάντα τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθεσίαν) than to the Hebrew text, which means 'and the uneven ground shall be level'. Hesiod is presumably referring to the man who is 'crooked', that is, devious and dishonest. But we have seen (p. 230) that this is a Semitic metaphor, and indeed that Marduk 'makes justice straight and tears out crooked speech'; that line from *Enūma eliš* is a better parallel than Isaiah for the Hesiodic verse. As for κάρφει 'withers', we may compare, for example,

Do not get angry at the wicked,
nor begrudge wrongdoers;
for like grass they will dry up on the morrow,
and like verdure they will wither.⁹⁰

Line 9, κλῦθι ἰδὼν αἰῶν τε, 'hearken, seeing and hearing', has also been quoted in chapter 5 together with some parallels. We may add a couple more:

Let thy eyes be open to thy servant's supplication, and to the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken to them in their every invocation of thee.

Let thy ear be attentive and thy eyes open, to hearken to thy servant's prayer.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Isa. 40. 4 (cf. 42. 16, 45. 2), quoted by Luke 3. 5.

⁹⁰ Ps. 37. 1–2, cf. 1. 3 f., 90. 5–7, 129. 6, Isa. 40. 6–8. The image is not common in Greek; cf. Sol. 4. 35, another biblical-sounding passage.

⁹¹ Above, p. 270; 1 Ki. 8. 52, Neh. 1. 6, cf. 1 Chr. 6. 40.

Hesiod's prayer is for Zeus to 'make judgments straight with righteousness', that is, to guide aright the judgments of mortal kings. Again we can quote a psalmist:

O God, give your judgments to the king
and your righteousness to the king's son.
Let him judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.⁹²

Hesiod, meanwhile, will tell his brother 'words of truth'. The personified Wisdom likewise, at the beginning of her homily in the Book of Proverbs, calls upon men to hear, for 'from the opening of my lips (will come) what is right, and my palate will utter truth'.⁹³

Hesiod then launches his discourse. He does not set the scene with a narrative introduction, as in *Ahiqar* and the other oriental texts mentioned above, but he achieves the same effect by describing Perses' delinquencies at the outset. After stating his new doctrine of the Good Life who prompts men to seek prosperity through work, he continues:

Perses, lay this down in your heart,
and may the Strife who exults in misfortune not keep your
heart from work,
a spectator of disputes, a listener at the debate.
Little business has a man with disputes and debates
who has not food for the year laid up at home,

and he goes on to relate—to Perses!—how the latter bribed the kings and took more than his share of the estate. Hanging about as a spectator of legal disputes is itself a vice recognized in the Mesopotamian wisdom tradition:

Do not roam about where people quarrel
[...] as a witness in the quarrel! ...
Stay far away from quarrel,
go the other way from taunt!

At a hearing do not go as a bystander,
where there is a dispute, do not loiter ...
In the face of a dispute, cut loose, don't concern yourself.⁹⁴

⁹² Ps. 72. 1–2.

⁹³ Prov. 8. 6 f.

⁹⁴ Op. 27–31; *Instructions of Shuruppak* 22–31, *Counsels of Wisdom* 31–6 (both cited by Walcot, 91).

The Prometheus myth (Op. 42-105)

To justify his insistence on Perses' working for his bread, Hesiod tells the story of how this necessity was imposed upon mankind by Zeus in response to Prometheus' trick in the matter of the sacrificial meat. We have seen in chapter 3 (p. 120) that the Babylonians and Hebrews had myths fulfilling the same purpose, and that the Hebrew one, as it appears in the third chapter of Genesis, has the closer analogy to the Greek.

When Zeus realizes that his initial measure, the withdrawal of fire from mankind, has been frustrated by Prometheus, who has stolen it and given it to men, he says to him,

You rejoice at having stolen fire and outwitted me—
a great calamity both for yourself and for men of the future;
for to set against the fire I shall give them an affliction in which
they will all delight, as they embrace their own misfortune.

The story of Kumarbi provides a very similar moment. When Kumarbi bites off and swallows Anu's genitals, and laughs, Anu says, 'You rejoice before your insides because you have swallowed my manhood. Do not rejoice before your insides: in your insides I have placed a burden.' And he goes on to explain what Kumarbi has brought upon himself.⁹⁵ The myth is a quite different one; the coincidence is in a detail of storytelling technique, by which the glee of the rogue who has won a trick is trumped by his victim's ability to predict his subsequent problems.

Zeus orders the making of Pandora. Hephaestus is to mould her from earth and water⁹⁶ and give her human voice and vigour; Athena is to teach her womanly accomplishments such as weaving; Aphrodite is to endow her with sex appeal, while Hermes gives her a talent for lies and deceit. The idea that this last propensity is a dispensation from the gods may seem surprising to modern religious sentiment. It is, however, paralleled in the Babylonian *Theodicy*.

The king of the gods, Narru, the creator of mankind,
(and) proud Zulumar, the pincher-off of their clay,
(and) the queen who fashioned them, the mistress Mami,
have bestowed on humankind crooked speech;
lies and untruths they bestowed on them for ever.⁹⁷

More generally, the motif that several different deities combine to bestow different qualities upon a person is well attested in the Mesopotamian

⁹⁵ *Op.* 55-8, *Kumarbi A* i 28-31 (Hoffner, 40 § 5-6).

⁹⁶ On this concept of the materials from which mankind is made cf. above, p. 237.

⁹⁷ *Op.* 60-8, cf. 70-80, *Theodicy* 276-80 (BWL 88).

and Hurro-Hittite traditions. It goes back to the royal hymns of the Isin-Lam dynasty at the beginning of the second millennium, and it remained a theme of royal propaganda down to the sixth century. Here, for example, are some lines in praise of Hammurabi:

He[!] gave you princeli[ness] ... Sin gave you supremacy ... Ninurta gave you an exalted weapon ... Ishtar gave you war and battle.

According to a fragment of the Hittite version of the Gilgamesh epic, [the great gods(?)] made Gilgamesh's form, the Sun-god gave him [manliness(?)], the Storm-god gave him heroism. In a myth about the creation of the genus 'king' we read that

Bellet-ili formed the king, the man of counsel.
the [great] gods gave the king (prowess in) battle,
Anu gave his crown, Enlil ga[ve his throne],
Nergal gave his weapons, Ninurta ga[ve his radiance],
Bellet-ili gave [his co]jutenance;
Nusku gave him direction and counsel and stoof[d before him](?).⁹⁸

Pandora opens a certain jar, in which all the world's evils have been confined, and her feckless act allows them all to escape. We are not told where the jar came from; commentators refer to the two jars set in Zeus' floor, from which he dispenses good and bad things to mortals.⁹⁹ But Volkert Haas has suggested that the motif may be related to Hittite magical ritual, in which incantation-priests dispatched evil and harm to the underworld and sealed them up in closed vessels.¹⁰⁰

Now that Pandora has let everything out of the jar, sicknesses roam abroad by day and by night, bringing ill to mortals, 'silently, because Zeus deprived them of voice'. The point of interest here is the emphasis on the diseases' silent approach—not, perhaps, an obvious matter to comment on. Aeschylus provides a partial parallel when he makes Athena say that inherited sin may make a man the Erinyes' victim, and then Destruction, coming in silence with hostile temper, reduces him to nought. It may be appropriate to compare Ut-napishtim's remarks to Gilgamesh about death:

⁹⁸ L. W. King, *The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi* iii, London 1900, 172 f. (*TUAT*, ii, 727); Laroche, 8; W. R. Mayer, *Or. N.S.* 56, 1987, 56. 36'-41'; cf. Assurbanipal's coronation hymn, *PLM* no. 11 rev. 5-8; Labat, 60-2; Tigay, 153 f.; Mayer, *op. cit.*, 63 f. The same motif may be applied to gods, as in the hymn to Marduk quoted above, p. 266; also Ebeling (1953), 102 (Seux, 110); *Kumarbi A* ii 4-15 (Hoffner, 41 § 10).

⁹⁹ *Op.* 94 f.; *Il.* 24. 527-33.

¹⁰⁰ V. Haas, *Or. N.S.* 45, 1976, 199 f.; *CANE* iii, 2030. On the imprisonment of evil in mythical containers cf. C. Bonner in R. P. Casey et al. (edd.), *Quantalacumque. Studies Presented to K. Lake*, London 1937, 1-8.

No one sees Death,
no one sees Death's face,
no one [hears] Death's voice,
furious is Death, the snapper-off of mankind.¹⁰¹

The Myth of Ages (Op. 106–201)

It has long been seen that Hesiod's system of five Ages, or rather Races, is based on a mythical scheme of four, symbolized by the metals gold, silver, bronze, and iron, between the last two of which he has interpolated the heroic age of Greek epic tradition. The original myth was quite schematic. As the successive metals reduced in value from the most precious to the basest, so the conditions of human life declined: each race was morally inferior to the one before; each had a shorter life-span; and within those shortening life-spans, each had a smaller proportion of youth. In Hesiod's version the Golden race show no signs of aging; the Silver race enjoy a hundred-year childhood, but then do not live very much longer; nothing is said about the onset of age in the Bronze race, but when the Iron race approaches its end the marks of old age will be present from birth, for babies will be born already grey-haired.

The myth appears entirely alien to the general Greek view of the past as reflected in the whole corpus of epic and genealogical poetry. Its very formalism is un-Greek. That it comes from some oriental source seems certain in view of the many traces of related motifs that may be found not only in Semitic but also, from the second half of the first millennium BC, in Iranian and Indian traditions.

The use of metal symbolism is most likely to have originated in the Near East, where the technologies of metal-working were most highly developed. In the period immediately before Hesiod the kingdom of Urartu in the old Hurrian heartland was of particular importance in this regard, but the lore of metals was more widely diffused. In the esoteric speculation of learned Babylonian clerics we find equations of metals with gods; in one list Silver, Gold, Copper, and Tin (each marked with the divine determinative) are identified with Anu, Enlil, Ea, and Ninazal respectively. The Hebrew prophets represent the moral impurities of nations with the metaphor of base metals alloyed with precious ones, which Yahweh will refine in his fire.¹⁰² Hesiod's system seems to have something in common with this, except that there is no mixture of metals in his races: each one has the simple quality of its associated metal.

¹⁰¹ *Op.* 102–4, Aesch. *Eum.* 936; *Gilg.* X vi 22–5.

¹⁰² Series *An* = *Anum*, CT 24, 49 E 3–6; Livingstone (1986), 176, 182; Isa. I. 25, Jer. 6. 27–30, Ezek. 22. 17–23, Mal. 3. 2 f.

In Iranian and later Jewish tradition we actually encounter the idea of successive historical ages symbolized by different metals. In two lost books of the *Avesta*, echoed in Pahlavi sources, Zoroaster was described having a vision of the future. He saw a tree with four branches of gold, silver, steel, and iron ore (in another version there were seven branches and metals), and Ahura Mazda explained to him that they were the ages of the world. The first, the golden, was that in which Zoroaster spoke directly with his god; in the last, religion would be weak and every sort of wickedness would be rife.

Evidently cognate with this Zoroastrian vision is the dream of Nebuchadnezzar related in the Book of Daniel. The Babylonian king dreams of a great statue with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. Daniel explains to him that the various parts represent five successive world kingdoms, the first (that of gold) being his, the rest inferior to it.¹⁰³

Further east, in India, we find a theory of four world ages (*yugas*) in which, while there is no metal symbolism, Krishna takes on four different colours, white, red, yellow, and black, corresponding to the four *avatars*. The ages are named after the throws of the die, the Winning (= Four), the Three, the Two, and the Strife (= One); their length decreases in these proportions, and so does righteousness. In the Winning Age religion and law are entire; men do not need to labour, because fruit appears as soon as it is thought of; there is no sickness, and people live for four hundred years. In the succeeding ages religion and law are diminished, the truth lapses, theft and deceit become commoner, the creatures perish from lawlessness. Evil and disease progressively increase, men grow smaller in stature, and their life-span contracts. In the last age the law is ended, crops fail, sickness is rife. Men father children at the age of ten and are grey-haired at sixteen, or according to another passage they live no longer than sixteen.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ *Bahman Yasht* I. 2–5, 2. 14–22 (E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, i. 191–201 with introd. pp. I–vi), *Dinkart* 9. 8 (ibid. iv. 180 f.), Dan. 2. 31–45; adduced by R. Reitzenstein, *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* 4, 1924/5, 3–10 = Heitsch, 525–33; R. Reitzenstein and H. H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus. Aus Iran und Griechenland*, Leipzig & Berlin 1926, 45–68; West (1978), 174 f. with further literature; Mary Boyce, *BSOAS* 47, 1984, 70–2; W. Burkert in D. Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East (Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979)*, Tübingen 1983, 244–6.

¹⁰⁴ The system is expounded in the *Mahābhārata* (3. 148, 186, 188) and *Laws of Manu* (1. 68–74, 79–86), and alluded to here and there in the *Upanishads* and *Purāṇas*, but absent from the older literature, the *Vedas* and *Brāhmaṇas*. See R. Roth, *Tübinger Universitätschriften aus dem Jahre 1860*, fasc. 2, 21–33 = Heitsch, 460–70, and other literature cited in West (1978), 176; J. A. B. van Buitenen (trs.), *The Mahābhārata* ii (Books 2 and 3), Chicago 1975, 504–6, 586–8, 592–8; Wendy Doniger (trs.), *The Laws of Manu*, Harmondsworth 1991, 11 f.

Mesopotamian and biblical traditions agree in the doctrine that human life was originally much longer than it is now, and that it has been shortened by stages. The Flood makes a clear division between eras, but it is the only such clear division. According to the Sumerian King List the antediluvian kings reigned for immense periods, measured in myriads of years. The kings of the first postdiluvian dynasties have much shorter reigns, but still of up to 1,560 years. After Gilgamesh, who rules for 126 years, the lengths of reign drop to realistic levels.¹⁰⁵ In Genesis the first breed of men live for up to 969 years; at the time of the Flood God decides to limit human life to 120 years.¹⁰⁶ Hesiod must think of his Silver race as living for about that length of time, since they have a hundred years of childhood followed by a brief maturity. For the rest he gives no figures, though we may notice the curious statement of Josephus that Hesiod, Hecataeus, Hellanicus, Acusilaus, Ephorus, and Nicolaus of Damascus all spoke of the ancients as living for a thousand years.¹⁰⁷

Let us look more closely at some of the features of Hesiod's account. His Golden race flourished in the time when Kronos was king in heaven (111).

They lived like gods, with carefree heart,
remote from toil and misery; neither did wretched
old age affect them ... all good things
were theirs, and the grain-giving soil bore its fruits
of its own accord in unstinted plenty.

The myth of a happy, easy life in the reign of Kronos existed independently of the Ages myth, and was more firmly rooted in the popular imagination.¹⁰⁸ Hesiod has filled out his picture of the Golden race by ascribing to them 'the life under Kronos'. At the same time, several of the details of this paradisiac existence are paralleled in the oriental versions of the Ages myth described above.

We may note in passing certain features which appear here and there in later Greek and Roman accounts of the Golden Age, though not in Hesiod, and which have Near Eastern parallels. Firstly there is the idea that it was a perpetual springtime, and that only when it came to an end

¹⁰⁵ T. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, Chicago 1939; *ANET*, 265 f.

¹⁰⁶ Gen. 6, 3, *Jub.* 5, 8, cf. 23, 9. Further shortening of life after Moses: *Jub.* 23, 11-15 (after Ps. 90, 10).

¹⁰⁷ Jos. *Ant. Jud.* 1, 108, followed by Eus. *PE* 9, 13 and other authors; Hes. fr. dub. 356. The proem of the pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 1, 8-13) said something about the life-span of the ancient heroes and their [freedom from(?) old age, but is tantalizingly fragmentary; it is not likely to have said anything of their living a thousand years.

¹⁰⁸ See H. C. Baldry, *CQ* 2, 1952, 83-92. In Genesis too the myth of the original paradise life is something separate from the myth of immense life-spans in the age before the Flood. Methuselah was never in Eden.

but rougher seasons manifest themselves and the leaves begin to fall. This motif seems to have been used by the poet of the *Catalogue of Women* (who apparently gave the heroic age the character of Hesiod's Silver age), and it is clear in Ovid; we also find traces of it in Jewish apocalyptic.¹⁰⁹

Secondly there is the idea that originally there were no noxious creatures on the earth. Empedocles writes of a time when all creatures were tame and friendly to the human race. It was Jupiter, according to Hyginus, who made snakes poisonous and wolves predatory; under Saturn there had been no fear of either. But already in a Sumerian epic we read a spell which contains a myth of the primeval age, saying

In those days, there being no snakes, there being no scorpions,
there being no hyenas, there being no lions,
there being no dogs or wolves,
there being nothing fearful or hair-raising,
mankind had no opponents.

The Hurro-Hittite tale of the god LAMA relates that while he was king in heaven, 'wolves [and(?) ...] did not exist', and also that '[the mountains(?)] flowed with beer-wine, the valleys [flow]ed with [...] poured out: mankind [... was well off(?)], and he was fully [...]'. In the following column Ea complains to Kumarbi that, with everything to hand, men have ceased to make offerings to the gods.¹¹⁰

Thirdly there is the idea that originally there was a single language. Hyginus states that this was the case before the time of Phoroneus, and it has been conjectured that his report derives from the epic *Phoronis*. The Sumerian spell quoted above continues with an account of how, in that primeval epoch, all countries spoke the same language, but Enki made them diverse. We recall the biblical myth of the Tower of Babylon and the confusion of tongues. A variant notion is that originally animals spoke the same language as humans. Babrius states this in the prologue to his Aesopic fables, in which, of course, the animals frequently communicate in human speech. It appears also in *Jubilees*, where we read that on the day that Adam was expelled from Eden, 'the mouths of all the wild animals and the cattle and the birds, and of everything that

¹⁰⁹ 'Hes.' fr. 204, 124-8, Ov. *Met.* 1, 107-20; *Apocalypse of Moses* 20, 4, 2 *Enoch* 22, 9 (pp. 163 and 357 Sparks).

¹¹⁰ Empedocles DK 31 B 130; Virg. *G.* 1, 129 f., cf. *Ec.* 4, 22; *Enumerkar and the Lord of Aratta* 136-40 (Jacobsen, 289); Laroche, 33 f. (Hoffner, 44 § 5, 6).

walks or moves, was shut, so that they could no longer speak; for up till then they had all spoken with one another in a common tongue.¹¹¹

Let us return to Hesiod's narrative. The Silver race, he tells us, was 'much inferior' to the Golden. For a hundred years a boy would stay in his mother's care, playing childishly at home, but once they reached adolescence they lived only a little longer, and that in suffering, because of their witlessness. The implied total life-span, we have noted, seems close to the 120 years which Yahweh established as the limit after the Flood. For the century of immaturity, however, the Lagash King Enmerkar provides a more precise parallel. Of the era that followed the Flood he says,

In those days a child spent a hundred years in nappies(?),
spent a hundred years in his rearing.
He was not made to perform (any) assigned tasks.
He was small, he was feeble (or: stupid); he was [with] his mother.¹¹²

According to Hesiod the fatal foolishness of these people was that 'they could not restrain themselves from crimes against each other, and they would not serve the immortals or sacrifice on the sacred altars of the blessed ones'. This corresponds well to the decline of religion and the growth of lawlessness which appear as basic features in the Iranian and Indian accounts.

About the Bronze race there is little to add. Hesiod says more explicitly that they were bellicose and perished at each other's hands. His fourth race, that of the heroes, may likewise be passed over here, as it has no counterpart in the oriental schemes.

His account of the Iron race is largely in the form of a series of prophecies about the future. There is a short section about the conditions that will obtain before the age comes to an end, and a much longer section about the events and situations that will herald its final destruction. In the former phase there will be ceaseless toil and misery, and yet 'even they shall have good things mixed among the ill' (179). Reitzenstein saw here an analogy with the Indian theory, according to which religion and law are reduced to a quarter of their full extent in the fourth age but not completely extinguished until the end of it.¹¹³

The first and most arresting sign of the end of the age will be that children will be born already grey-haired (181). According to

Enmerkar's exposition in the *Mahābhārata*, among the features of the last age are that 'girls get pregnant at the age of seven and eight, and boys of ten and twelve become fathers. Men turn grey in their sixteenth year, and quickly live out their lives.' *Jubilees* provides a more drastic formulation:

And the heads of the children will be white with grey hair, and a child three weeks old will look like a man who is a hundred, and their growth will be stunted by their misery and distress.¹¹⁴

It is obvious that Hesiod did not think of this motif for himself.

The other signs that he lists consist in the breakdown of law and order and of the normal ties of family and society.

Nor will father be like (?= at one with) children nor children like father,
nor guest to host, or comrade to comrade,
nor will a brother be friendly, as in former times.

They will lose all respect for their old parents, they will cease to fear the gods, they will sack each other's towns, they will perjure themselves for gain, and those who do this will be more admired than the righteous.

Such themes are typical of oriental prophecies of doom. Here are some Babylonian examples from the late second millennium or the first half of the first:

As long as he is king, battle and conflict will not be ended. In that reign brother will devour his brother, people will sell their sons for silver, the lands will all be confused at once; man will desert maid and maid will desert man; mother will bar her door against daughter ... [A friend] will fell his friend with a weapon, [a comrade] will destroy his comrade with a weapon, [the land]s will all be destroyed at once.

Town will become enemy with town, house with house, father with son, brother with brother, man with man, comrade with friend; they will not speak the truth with one another.

A son will not ask about a father's health, or a sire about a son's;
a mother will cheerfully [plot evil] for a daughter.

I shall shorten their days;
I shall cut off [the life] of the just man who intercedes for another;
I shall set at the top the evil man who cuts off life.
I shall change people's hearts, and the father will not listen to the son,
the daughter will speak words of hate to the mother,
I shall make their words evil, and they will forget their god,

¹¹⁴ *Mahābhārata* 3. 186. 52 f., trs. van Buitenen 587 f.; *Jub.* 23. 25. Cf. also 4 Ezra 6. 21 (babies born after three or four months in the womb, and speaking at a year).

¹¹¹ Hyg. *Fab.* 143, cf. Caduff, 232; *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* 141-56 (Jacobsen, 289 f.); Gen. 11. 1-9; Babr. *Prot.* 6 ff. *Jub.* 3. 28.

¹¹² *Op.* 130-4, E. Sollberger, *JCS* 21, 1967, 287 obv. i 14-19; T. Jacobsen, *JBL* 100, 1981, 520 f.; Bottéro-Kramer, 521. For the translation above I am indebted to Dr. J. A. Black. Jacobsen remarks the parallel with Hesiod, and cites J. Peradotto as having drawn it to his attention.

¹¹³ Reitzenstein-Schneider (as n. 103), 63.

to their goddess they will utter great insolence.
I shall rouse up the [brig]and and cut off journeying;
within the city they will plunder each other's possessions.

Similar passages can be cited from the Hebrew prophets.¹¹⁵ In the specific context of the Last Age they are common to the Iranian and Indian texts and Jewish apocalyptic:

The affection of the father will depart from the son, and that of the brother from his brother; the son-in-law will become a beggar from his father-in-law, and the mother will be parted and estranged from the daughter.

The Law-minded dwindle, the evil prosper ... Men will rob and harm one another ... No father will condone his son, no son his father ... Sons will kill their fathers and mothers at the end of the Aeon, women will kill their husbands.

At that time shall friends fight one against another like enemies.¹¹⁶

Hesiod's prophecy concludes with the picture of the goddesses Aion and Nemesis—roughly Decency and Moral Disapproval—veiling their faces and quitting the earth to rejoin the gods above (197–200). Even this motif is rooted in Near Eastern tradition. In a twelfth-century Babylonian poem in praise of Nebuchadnezzar I it is related that in the reign of a previous king Good was distant and Evil prevailed. Marduk was angry, and ordered the gods of the land to abandon it.

The Guardian of Well-being became angry, he went up [to the
base of heaven,]
[the Protector] of Justice stood aside.

In an inscription of Esarhaddon it is reported that

Within the town there was oppression (and) the taking of bribes; every day without cease they plundered one another's property; the son cursed his father in the street, the slave [was not obeying] his master, [the maid] was not obeying her mistress. Their gods ... goddesses abandoned their functions.¹¹⁷

In view of all the material set out above, what are we to suppose lies behind Hesiod's Myth of Ages? The scheme of eras designated by metals cannot have originated in Greece; nor can the analogous schemes in the Iranian texts and Daniel, although they appear centuries later than

¹¹⁵ *Op.* 182–96; prophecy of Shulgi, ed. R. Borger, *Bibl. Or.* 28, 1971, 14 iv 6' ff., v 5 ff. (Foster, 271); Cuthaean legend of Naram-Sin (Neo-Assyrian), ed. O. R. Gurney, *An. Stud.* 5, 1955, 106 lines 136–9 (Foster, 268); *Erra* IIc 33 f., IIIa 6–14; *Mic.* 7, 2–6; *Isa.* 3, 5. L. Koenen, *TAPA* 124, 1994, 16–20, cites some of these Akkadian prophecies and also some Egyptian ones.

¹¹⁶ *Bahman Yašt* 2, 30; *Mahābhārata* 3, 186, 47, 188, 22, 42, 78; 4 *Ezra* 6, 24; cf. *Jub.* 23, 19 f.

¹¹⁷ W. G. Lambert in P. Garelli (ed.), *Le palais et la royauté* (XIX^e Rencontre assyriologique internationale), Paris 1974, 436, 19 (Foster, 292); Borger, 12 f.

Hesiod, be derived from him. It seems necessary to postulate a common source, dating from the earlier first millennium (not before the archaeological Iron Age) and located somewhere in the Near East. A Phoenician source would be imaginable in itself, but could hardly account for the spread of the myth to Iran and India. It is natural to think of Mesopotamia, in view of its outstanding importance as a centre of cultural diffusion; but Urartu to the north also has a potential claim that should not be overlooked.

The rhetorical treatment of the disasters of the last age implies that the myth came to Greece not just as a raw story outline but in literary form, that is to say in poetic form. Hesiod's wish that he had been born in either an earlier or a subsequent age (175) has sometimes been taken to imply that he expected a new and better age to begin after the conclusion of this one. The inference is not absolutely necessary, and he presents the scheme of five ages as if it is finite and complete.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that the myth that he was following did not say firmly, 'this Iron race is the gods' final experiment; after this there will be no more human beings at all'. In fact, the eastern versions known to us all provide for a continuation. In the Indian theory a new Winning Age dawns and the cycle starts all over again, repeating itself indefinitely. The new-beginning is stated to take place 'when sun, moon, Rāya, and Jupiter are in conjunction in the same sign of the zodiac'.¹¹⁹ This seems to reflect (like the return of the Golden Age in Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*) the Stoic theory of a Great Year associated with planetary conjunctions. Cyclicalism, however, has no place in Zoroastrian, Judaic, or Babylonian thought at any period relevant to Hesiod. In the Iranian texts and in Daniel the story ends with the restoration by God of a perfect world which will last for ever. The archetypal version from which Hesiod's account descends may have concluded in some such way. But if so, the happy ending was discarded, by him or before him.

The justice of Zeus (Op. 202–85)

Hesiod now turns to the kings, addressing them with a fable. A hawk, carrying off a nightingale in its talons, asked why she was screaming, and pointed out that it was foolish to struggle against one much stronger.

This is the first occurrence of an animal fable in Greek literature; others were to appear a little later in Archilochus and Semonides. The genre had had a long history in the Near East, starting with the Sumerians, and there is no doubt that the Greek tradition derives from the

¹¹⁸ Cf. West (1978), 197.

¹¹⁹ *Mahābhārata* 3, 188, 87 (p. 597 van Buitenen).

Near East. Many of the individual fables found in Greek have counterparts in oriental texts, and the use of fables as a pointed lesson for a particular addressee, as well as their gathering in collections, is common to the two traditions.¹²⁰ Fables could also be used in wisdom literature. There is perhaps not as much evidence of this as one might expect, but one example can be cited from the Sumerian *Instructions of Shuruppak*, and others from *Ahiqar*. It is natural to suppose that Hesiod made the acquaintance of fable in this connection.

This particular fable of the hawk and the nightingale is not known from oriental sources, though Walcot has compared a couple of Sumerian ones which are similar in spirit. One tells of a lion who had caught a hog and proceeded to bite him, saying, 'Until now your flesh has not filled my mouth, but your squeals have made a din in my ears!' The other concerns a butcher who slaughters a pig, saying, 'Must you squeal? This is the road which your sire and grandsire travelled, and now you are going on it: and yet you squeal.'¹²¹

In the following sections, addressed alternately to Perses and to the kings, Hesiod makes intermittent use of the personified figure of Right (Dike). He urges Perses to 'hearken' to her (213, 275), as if she were a preacher or advocate. We are reminded of the personified Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs, who

cries out in the street, in the plaza she gives voice ...
'How long, simpletons, will you love simple-mindedness? ...
Whoever hearkens to me will dwell secure.'¹²²

Again, Dike is pictured as a maiden whom venal and crooked judges assault and drag from her path (220 f.). When she is abused, however, she goes and sits by her father Zeus and reports the matter to him, so that the people may be made to pay for the crimes of their unjust lords (256-62). Compare.

Justice is pushed backward, and Righteousness stands far away,
for Truth stumbles in the plaza, and Straightness cannot enter. ...
And Yahweh has seen, and it is bad in his eyes, that there is no justice.

¹²⁰ See K. Meuli, *Herkunft und Wesen der Fabel*, Basel 1954 = *Gesammelte Schriften*, Basel 1975, ii, 731-56; M. Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, Copenhagen 1964, i, 431-41; B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge Mass. & London 1965, xi-xxxiv; T. Karadagli, *Fabel und Ainos. Studien zur griechischen Fabel* (Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie, 135), Königstein 1981, 6-52.

¹²¹ E. I. Gordon, *JCS* 12, 1958, 49 (coll. 5, 57); id. in *Древний Мир. Сборник статей Академику Василию Васильевичу Струве*, Moscow 1962, 243 (coll. 8, 2); Walcot, 90.

¹²² Prov. 1, 20-33, cf. 8, 1-9, 6. The passages are thought to be post-exilic.

He has put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
and wrapped himself in indignation as in a robe:
according to the deeds, so he will requite.¹²³

In between these passages about Dike, Hesiod presents a catalogue of all the blessings that attend a just community and all the calamities that befall an unjust one (225-47).

Whoso give straight judgments to visitors and their own people,
and do not deviate from what is just,
their community flourishes,
and the people bloom in it.
Pence is about the land, fostering the young,
and never does wide-seeing Zeus mark out war as their portion.
Nor are straight-judging men ever attended by Famine or Blight,
and they feast on the crops they tend.¹²⁴ ...
The fleecy sheep are laden down with wool;
the womenfolk bear children that resemble their parents;
they enjoy a continual sufficiency of good things. ...
But for those who are set on wicked violence and brutal deeds,
Kronos' son, wide-seeing Zeus, marks out retribution.
Often a whole community together suffers because of a bad man
who does wrong and contrives evil.
From heaven Kronos' son brings disaster upon them,
famine and with it plague, and the people waste away.
The womenfolk do not give birth, and households decline,
by Olympian Zeus' design. At other times again
he either destroys those men's broad army, or their city wall,
or he punishes their ships at sea.

We saw in chapter 3 that public disasters such as these, plagues, famines, defeats, were understood in the Near East, as in Greece, as typical manifestations of divine anger, perhaps provoked by the injustice of the ruler, while communal prosperity and the fertility of the soil and the livestock were seen as the consequences of just and righteous kingship (pp. 127, 136). The way in which these ideas are formulated in the present passage, however, with the two alternative scenarios set side by side as in a diptych, has more specific parallels in the Old Testament. Yahweh declares to Moses on Mt. Sinai:

¹²³ Isa. 59, 14-18.

¹²⁴ I have laid out these lines so as to bring out the similarity of their style with the parallelistic form of Semitic poetry. For the metaphor in 227, λαοὶ δ' ἀνθίσουσιν, 'the people bloom', cf. Ps. 72, 16 (prayers for a new king's reign), 'and may (people) bloom (γὰρ ἡδὲ; ἐξανθήσουσιν LXX) from the city like the heritage of the earth'; Labat, 281 f.

If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and act on them then I will give your rains at their right time, and the land will give its produce and the trees of the field will give their fruit ... And I will give peace in the land ... and the sword shall not pass across your land ... And I will be turned towards you, and will make you fruitful, and make you multiply ...

But if you do not hearken to me, and do not act on all these commandments ... I will ordain upon you terror and the consumption and the fever, which ruin the eyes and consume the spirit. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it ... and your land will not give its produce, and the trees of the land will not give their fruit ... I will send plague among you, and you shall be given into the hand of the enemy.¹²⁵

Hesiod follows his diptych of the just and unjust communities with a warning to the rulers:

O kings, now you yourselves must attend
to this justice(-giving); for close at hand among men
there are immortals taking note of all who with crooked judgments
afflict each other, heedless of the gods' punishment.

Compare the admonition of a psalmist:

Now therefore, you kings, be percipient,
be advised, you rulers of the earth.
Serve Yahweh in fear, and kiss his feet in trembling,
lest he be angry, and you stray from the path.¹²⁶

After developing his account of how mortal wrongdoing is reported to Zeus, Hesiod repeats his advice to the kings to put crooked judgments out of their minds, and adds the general maxim that 'a man fashions ill for himself who fashions ill for another, and the ill design is most ill for the designer'. Similar sentiments are expressed in several places in the Old Testament, as well as in the Syriac *Ahiqar* and in Egyptian wisdom literature.¹²⁷

At 267 comes a further warning for the kings:

The eye of Zeus that sees all and takes note of all
observes even these affairs (here), if it chooses, and does not fail
to perceive
what even this kind of justice is that the community has within it.

¹²⁵ Lev. 26. 3–25, similarly Deut. 28. 1–68 (Bogan, 304). A similar set of afflictions (defeat, drought, famine, pestilence) are given as punishments of the nation for sinning against Yahweh in I Ki. 8. 33 ff.

¹²⁶ Op. 248–51, Ps. 2. 10 f., compared by Bogan, 415.

¹²⁷ Op. 265 f.; Ps. 7. 16(15) f., 9. 16(15) f., 57. 7(6), Prov. 1. 18 f., 26. 27, Eccl. 10. 8; *Ahiqar* (Syriac) 8. 41; *Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* 21. 11 (Lichtheim, iii. 175).

In my commentary I referred to the Vedic Varuna, the celestial supervisor of justice, who has countless spies on earth (like Hesiod's Zeus in 249–55) and whose eye is the sun, and also to Zoroastrian allusions to Ahura Mazda's eye. A pair of rather closer parallels, however, can be quoted from a nearer country, Israel, one of them at least from Hesiod's own century:

In every place are the eyes of Yahweh, watching the wicked and the good.

Behold, the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are upon the sinful kingdom.¹²⁸

In the next lines Hesiod makes rhetorical use of an impious paradox-wish. In the existing situation, apparently, it is a bad thing to be a righteous man, and the unrighteous has the greater right; therefore 'let me not be righteous in my dealings with men, either myself or a son of mine'. But then comes a retraction, based on the poet's faith in divine justice: 'Only I do not expect resourceful Zeus is bringing *this* to pass yet!' H. G. Evelyn-White adduced an apt parallel for this sequence from the seventy-third Psalm. The poet relates that his feet had almost stumbled, for he had observed how the wicked prospered and had envied them, but then he had realized his error.

Behold, these are the wicked:
always at ease, they increase their means.
Indeed it is in vain that I kept my heart pure,
and washed my hands in innocence,
while I have been knocked about all day long,
and reproached in the mornings.
(Yet) if I had said 'I will reckon thus',
why, I would have been untrue to the generation of thy children.¹²⁹

In the next paragraph Hesiod argues that Zeus rewards righteousness with prosperity, and that if one speaks the truth on oath, one's family will subsequently grow in status, whereas the perjurer's family will be more obscure. This association between honesty and progeny has parallels in Babylonian wisdom texts. In a fourteenth-century Akkadian–Hurrian bilingual fragment from Ugarit we read: 'He who swears (falsely) at the river, his(?) heir is withheld; for a long time his wife will not have a son.' The dishonest merchant, too, must expect that

His property will not be controlled by his heir,
his brothers will not come into his house.

¹²⁸ West (1978), 219, 223 f.; Prov. 15. 3, Amos 9. 8. Cf. also Ps. 11. 4 f., Zech. 4. 10, 2 Chr. 16. 9 (Bogan, 416); J. P. Brown, ZAW 95, 1983, 379 n. 16.

¹²⁹ Op. 270–3; H. G. Evelyn-White, CQ 14, 1920, 130; Ps. 73. 12–15.

(But) the honest merchant who pays loans by the '[fa]' standard, who gives extra value,
is pleasing to Shamash; he gives him extra life.
He makes his family extensive, he wins wealth;
as the waters of an unfailing spring, [his] seed is unfai[ling].¹³⁰

Precepts (Op. 286–764)

To impress upon Perses the superiority of work over idleness Hesiod uses the image of two alternative roads, the one leading to κακότης, a low social condition, the other to ἀρετή, a high social condition. The first road is smooth and short, for κακότης lives close at hand; the other is long, steep, and initially rugged, but it becomes easy once you get to the top of the hill. The idea that it is much easier to sink than to rise is expressed in similar terms in the Sumerian proverb 'wealth is distant, poverty is close by'. We can also compare that chapter of Proverbs in which Wisdom and Mrs Folly are represented as having houses in the town and as each trying to entice people in. The image of the two roads is closely paralleled in other passages:

In the way of righteousness is life,
but the road of ἱπᾱθή (μνησικακών LXX) leads to death.

The road of the idler is like a hedge of briars,
but the way of the right-minded is a made-up highway.

The way for the righteous is level going;
thou smoothest the tracks of the righteous.¹³¹

Hesiod's next proposition is that if a man cannot see what is best for himself, he had better accept good advice from another: if he does not do that, he is a worthless creature. Once again the Hebrew Proverbs express the same thought:

The ear that listens to vital reproof will abide among the wise.
He who is careless of instruction is rejecting his life,
while he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.¹³²

¹³⁰ Op. 280–5, cf. Hdt. 6. 86. 2y. 2; BWL 116 (with Lambert, *ibid.* 317); Shamash Hymn 116–21 (BWL 132; Foster, 541). Cf. also the *Laws of Manu* 8. 97–9 (trs. Doniger, as above, n. 104): 'Listen, my friend, to the enumeration, in order, of the number of relatives that a man destroys when he lies in testifying: he destroys five by lying about livestock, and he destroys ten by lying about cows; he destroys a hundred by lying about horses, and a thousand by lying about men. He kills the born and the unborn by lying in a matter that concerns gold, and he kills everything by lying about land.'

¹³¹ Op. 287–92; E. I. Gordon (as ch. 2, n. 75), 49, 496 f.; Prov. 9. 1–18 (compared by Dornseiff, 84), 12. 28, 15. 19; Isa. 26. 7.

¹³² Op. 293–7; Prov. 15. 31 f.

Presently, from about line 320, we find ourselves in a section in which moral and ethical precepts come thick and fast, many of them accompanied by a brief justification. The style hereabouts is particularly reminiscent of parts of Proverbs and of the Babylonian *Counsels of Wisdom*. The content too is often paralleled in the oriental texts.

In 320–6 Hesiod argues that property acquired by violence or dishonesty is far inferior to what is god-given, because the gods bring the offender low and his ill-gotten wealth attends him¹³³ for but a short time. For this idea, which is echoed by Solon and other Greek poets, the best Near Eastern parallel known to me from earlier times comes from the Egyptian *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet*, a work which, it may be recalled, was apparently known in Palestine and provided some material for Proverbs: 'Better is a bushel given you by the god than five thousand through wrongdoing. They stay not a day in bin and barn ... a moment is their stay in the granary.'¹³⁴

The next lines contain a list of other delictions which equally arouse divine anger: harming a suppliant or a stranger, adultery with one's brother's wife, wronging orphans, or foul-mouthing one's aged father. The formal status accorded to the suppliant is perhaps a specifically Greek phenomenon, but all the other items correspond to wrongs identified as such in biblical and other Near Eastern literature.¹³⁵

In 342–5 Hesiod advises

Invite to dinner him who is friendly, and him who is not, leave be.
Above all invite him who lives near you;
for if something untoward happens at your place,
neighbours come ungirt, but relatives have to gird themselves.

The negative portion of the first line resembles a precept of the Sumerian Shuruppak: 'Do not feed a hostile person, do not wipe out a quarrel'. The point of the following verses is conveyed exactly in Proverbs.

Do not go to your brother's house in the day of your disaster:
better a neighbour nearby than a brother far off.¹³⁶

¹³³ ὄλβος ὀνηθεῖ, a purely poetic expression (cf. *Hymn. Hom.* 30. 12), paralleled in Akkadian: *Theodicy* 282 *mešrū illakū idāšu*, 'riches go at his side'.

¹³⁴ *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet* viii 19–ix 3 (Lichtheim, ii. 152; cited by Walcot, 87); cf. above, p. 94. A late Jewish parallel is *I Enoch* 97. 8–10, 'Woe to you who acquire silver and gold but not in righteousness ... Your riches will not stay with you, but will quickly go up from you.'

¹³⁵ Op. 327–35. Strangers, widows, orphans: above, pp. 129f. Adultery with brother's wife: Lev. 20. 21. Cursing parents: Exod. 21. 17 (Bogan, 418), Lev. 20. 9, Prov. 20. 20.

¹³⁶ *Instructions of Shuruppak* 65; Prov. 27. 10; cf. *Ahiqar* (Syriac A) 2. 49, 'My son, better is a friend that is at hand than a brother who is far away'. For a further parallel in a late Egyptian wisdom text see West (1978), 243.

Hesiod continues for a few lines on the subject of neighbours, remarking, *inter alia*, that 'neither would a cow be lost, but for a bad neighbour'. 'Be lost' (ἀπολέσθαι) would cover being stolen, wandering astray, or getting into some dangerous predicament. No doubt it is a universal truth that neighbours of averagely good disposition will assist in such matters by warning or personal intervention, but it may be noted that the Deuteronomist explicitly enjoins it.¹³⁷

Returning to the theme of theft, Hesiod comes up with the proposition that Harpax ('Lady Snatch') is 'a giver of death'. This is very untypical of Greek moralizing poetry, where it is normally said that a wrongdoer will suffer, be brought down, pay the penalty, etc.: the threats are dark but imprecise. Death as the wages of sin recalls once more the language of Proverbs. Mrs Folly tells the fool that stolen water is sweet,

But he does not know that the Shades are there;
her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

Of no profit are treasures (got) of wickedness,
whereas righteousness rescues from death.

The making of treasures with a lying tongue
is a vapour dispersed, and a snare of death.¹³⁸

The right way to amass property, according to Hesiod, is by honest toil, and little by little, 'for if you lay down even a little on a little, and do this often, even that may well grow big'. Again, Proverbs provides a parallel:

Wealth from vanity(?) will diminish,
but he who gathers it (handful) on hand(ful) will increase it.¹³⁹

Another peril against which we are warned both by Hesiod and by Near Eastern wisdom texts is that of the seductive woman who may delude us with her words of enticement:

Let no bum-rigged woman deceive your wits
with her wily twitterings as she pokes into your granary.

For the commandment is a lamp, and the Law a light ...
to preserve you from the wicked woman,
from the smooth-tongued one, the alien.

Do not be charmed by her beauty in your heart,

¹³⁷ *Op.* 348; Deut. 22, 1-4.

¹³⁸ *Op.* 356; Prov. 9, 18, 10, 2, 21, 6, cf. 1, 19, 2, 18, 5, 5, 7, 23, 8, 35 f., etc.

¹³⁹ *Op.* 361 f.; Prov. 13, 11

nor let her take you with her eyelids.¹⁴⁰

It is also important to beware of idleness. Even in winter, Hesiod advises, an industrious man can do much to benefit his household, and he should resist the temptation to sit about in the warm smithy and the cosy parlour, 'lest in severe weather Helplessness overtake you together with Poverty, and you squeeze a swollen foot with emaciated hand'. The two figures of Helplessness and Poverty are graphically personified, and the picture evoked is of their seizing the unfortunate idler like a pair of ruffians. Even this very specific fancy is closely paralleled in the Hebrew Proverbs:

A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of hands for rest,
and your poverty will come like a highwayman,
and your want like an armed man.¹⁴¹

At harvest-time in particular Hesiod warns against lying abed. One should not go on sleeping till sunrise but get on with the job and gather home the grain, getting up before dawn in order to ensure sufficient livelihood. Hear the Hebrew again:

One who gathers (the grain) in summer is a prudent son;
one who slumbers at the harvest is a son who brings shame.

Do not love sleep, lest you be dispossessed;
open your eyes, (and there will be) plenty to eat.¹⁴²

The only ones who naturally sleep in the daytime are those who do disreputable things at night, such as the burglar, whom Hesiod calls the 'couchbyday' (ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνὴρ), and of whom a Hebrew writer says, 'In the dark he digs through houses, by day they shut themselves up; they do not know the light'.¹⁴³

In a later section of his poem Hesiod gives further instruction on social and religious matters. Several of his precepts about proper speech have their counterparts in oriental wisdom.

1. He says that one should never insult a man for being poor, since poverty is the dispensation of the gods. We find the same sentiment with the same justification in Proverbs: 'he who mocks a poor man is reproaching his maker', as well as in the *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet*,

¹⁴⁰ *Op.* 373 f.; Prov. 6, 23-5, cf. 2, 16, 5, 3, 7, 5-27; *Counsels of Wisdom* 66-80; also Egyptian texts cited in West (1978), 251.

¹⁴¹ *Op.* 496 f.; Prov. 6, 10 f. = 24, 33 f. The renderings 'highwayman' and 'armed man' are not altogether certain. For the Hesiodic 'swollen foot' Bogan (420 f.) compared Deut. 8, 4.

¹⁴² *Op.* 574-7; Prov. 10, 5, 20, 13.

¹⁴³ *Op.* 605; Job 24, 16 (Bogan, 422).

'do not laugh at a blind man nor tease a dwarf ... Man is clay and straw, the god is his builder ... He makes a thousand poor by his will.'¹⁴⁴

2. He says that men's best treasure (θησαυρός) is restraint in use of the tongue. So in the *Counsels of Wisdom*:

Let your mouth be controlled, let your speech be under guard:
(it is) the worth of a man; let your lips be (treated as) very precious.

That is, one's lips/speech should be kept under guard like valuables. The same sphere of imagery is used in Proverbs: 'There is gold, and many a coral, but wise lips are (the most) precious equipment.'¹⁴⁵

3. He says that 'if you speak ill, you may well hear greater yourself', that is, have your offensive remarks returned with interest. The Sumerians had observed this long before: 'he did not answer the curser with curses; in answering with a curse, he would be answered with curses', or again, 'the one who insults will be insulted'.¹⁴⁶

Some of Hesiod's admonitions take the form 'do not do X: whoever does that makes the gods angry, and they punish him'.

And never step across the fair-flowing water of perpetual rivers, until you have prayed, looking into the fair stream, after washing your hands in the lovely clear water.
If a man crosses a river without cleansing his wickedness and his hands,
the gods look askance at him, and give him woe later.

And do not, when you come upon a burning sacrifice,
balefully find fault with it: the god resents that too.

We find exactly the same structure in the *Counsels of Wisdom*:

Do not show contempt for the wretched and [...],
do not sneer haughtily at them:
at this, one's god is angry with him,
it is not pleasing to Shamash, he will repay him with evil.¹⁴⁷

The days of the month (Op. 765-828)

The last section of the *Works and Days* is concerned with days of the month that are good or bad for different purposes. Most of the days have

¹⁴⁴ Op. 717 f., cf. Thgn. 155-8; Prov. 17. 5, *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet* xxiv 8-16 (Lichtheim, ii. 160). cf. *Counsels of Wisdom* 57-60, quoted below.

¹⁴⁵ Op. 719 f., *Counsels* 26 f., Prov. 20. 15.

¹⁴⁶ Op. 721, cf. II. 20. 250, Alc. 341; E. I. Gordon (as ch. 2, n. 75), 81; B. Alster, *Studies in Sumerian Proverbs* (as ch. 2, n. 49), 140.

¹⁴⁷ Op. 737-41, 755 f., cf. Thgn. 659 f.; *Counsels of Wisdom* 57-60.

something said about them. Five are called 'holy'; eleven are good for particular activities, mainly agricultural; five are good days for a boy to be born on, two are good for a girl, and in two cases birth on a certain day (or in the middle of a certain day) is associated with a specific character. One day is better in the morning and another in the afternoon. Certain days are bad for some purposes. In two cases the quality of a day is linked with its being the birthday of a certain god.

This hemerology is quite isolated in pre-Hellenistic Greek literature. There is some Classical evidence for holy or inauspicious days and for days associated with particular deities, but not for the idea that certain days are good or bad for particular undertakings. Hesiod himself remarks in two or three cases that 'few people know' the facts he is imparting. Heraclitus, who criticized Hesiod for classifying days as good or bad, evidently did not see this as a common Greek belief, and Herodotus credits the Egyptians with working out 'which god each month and day belongs to, and which date of birth will bring a person what fortunes, what manner of death, and what character', adding that Greek poets have made use of such lore.¹⁴⁸

It was indeed established in Egypt, and also in Mesopotamia, where it is attested in the Kassite period and had an increasing vogue thereafter. Hesiod's theory differs from the Egyptian in that he makes no distinction between one month and another: the days have the same qualities in any month. He agrees in this with Neo-Assyrian practice, which, from at least the end of the second millennium, observed more or less the same rules for every month, generalizing what had once been rules for the sacred month Nisan.¹⁴⁹

Extensive agreements between Hesiodic and Mesopotamian teaching about the days are not to be found, but there do seem to be certain points of contact. Hesiod begins his recital by declaring that the 1st, the 4th, the 7th, the 8th, and the 9th are holy days (770-2).¹⁵⁰ In the case of the 7th he gives the reason, namely that it is the birthday of Apollo; in other sources Apollo is also associated with the 1st, the day of the new moon. The 9th, with its counterpart 'the middle 9th' (= the 19th), receives further commendation in lines 810-13:

The middle 9 is a better day towards evening;
but the first 9 is altogether harmless for mankind.

¹⁴⁸ Op. 814, 818, 820, 824; Heraclitus ap. Plut. *Camill.* 19. 3 = fr. 59 Marcovich, DK 22 B 106, *Idt.* 2. 82. 1.

¹⁴⁹ S. H. Langdon, *Babylonian Menologies and the Semitic Calendars*, London 1935, 48, 73. Cf. R. Labat, *Hémérologies et ménologies d'Assur*, Paris 1939; id., *RIA* iv. 317-23 s.v. Hemerologien.

¹⁵⁰ Line 772 is mispunctuated in most editions. See West (1978), 353.

It is good for planting and for being born,
both for man and for woman, and it is never a wholly bad day.

Nilsson related this scheme to the series of rest-days or taboo days specified in Assyrian texts. According to the so-called Aššur Hemerologies (eleventh century), the 'dangerous' days for the month of Nisan comprised the 1st, the 7th and its multiples (14th, 21st, 28th), the three 9ths (9, 19, 29), and the 30th. In the later 'Royal Hemerologies' (*Enbu bēl arhi*), dating from the Sargonid period, they are reduced to the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st, and 28th.¹⁵¹ It seems very plausible that the idea of the new-moon day and the seventh as holy days should have come to Greece from the orient. In view of their consecration to Apollo, Delphi may have been involved.

The case for an eastern connection is strengthened by Hesiod's emphasis on 9ths, and especially by his reference to a day which he calls the 'Thricenine' (τρικαινός), presumably the 27th. 'Thricenine' is not just a casual designation, for he says pointedly that few people call it by its 'true' name. This 'truth' is a reflex of Babylonian number mysticism. In an abstruse text dealing with dates of the month and the lunar phases associated with them we read:

You call Shamash and Sin 3×3 [...] 9×3 is 27; 27 is the 27th day.¹⁵²

I have found only one other numerical connection between Hesiodic and oriental hemerology. Hesiod advises us that the 5ths (that is, probably, the 5th, 15th, and, counting backwards from the end in the last third of the month, the 26th) are difficult and dire, because it was on a 5th that Oath was born, with the Erinyes in attendance—Oath, whom Strife bore as a bane for perjurers. This means that people swearing oaths are in particular danger on these days. As we have seen before (pp. 126, 292), the personification of Oath as a supernatural figure who pursues the forsworn is Babylonian and Assyrian. I cannot produce any documentation regarding her birthday (she is feminine in Akkadian). But in Assyrian almanacs the 5th is one of several days when one may not go to law, and on the 15th 'one may not take oath'.¹⁵³

In one of the verses quoted above, the 'middle 9' (19th) is said to be better towards evening (ἐπὶ δειλά). Another day, the 21st, is described

¹⁵¹ Langdon, *op. cit.*, 83; M. P. Nilsson, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 14, 1911, 434 f., 442–7 = *Opuscula selecta* i. 47 f., 55–60; id., *Primitive Time-Reckoning*, Lund 1920, 367 f.; id., *Die Entstehung und religiöse Bedeutung des griechischen Kalenders*, 2nd ed., Lund 1962, 48 f.; id., *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, i³, 561 f.

¹⁵² *Op.* 814, 818; K 2164 and duplicates, obv. 20 f. (series iNAM.giš.hur.an.kia, late second millennium?) in Livingstone (1986), 24 f., with commentary, 41.

¹⁵³ Langdon *op. cit.*, 74, 77. The association of the three 5ths with danger to perjurers reappears in Byzantine hemerologies, cf. West (1978), 359 f.

as best in the morning and worse towards evening. This division of the day into two parts for prognosticatory purposes is paralleled in the Babylonian and Assyrian almanacs, where it is often stated that 'half of the day is lucky'. Here, as in the matter of differentiation between months, Hesiod seems to go with Mesopotamia against Egypt, where each day was divided into three parts, each labelled good or bad.¹⁵⁴

Summing up at the end, Hesiod comes out with the dictum

Sometimes a day is a stepmother, sometimes a mother

For the Greeks and Romans stepmothers were a byword for malignity. But the metaphorical use as a predicate, in antithesis with 'mother' similarly used, is startling, and hardly to be paralleled in Greek. We can find formal analogies, however, in the Sumerian saying, 'The palace— one day it is a mother who has given birth; the next day, it is a mother in mourning!' and in an Akkadian one: 'full moon is a mother, new moon a father'.¹⁵⁵

Hesiod concludes:

Well with god and fortune is he who works
with knowledge of all this, giving the immortals no cause for offence,
judging the bird omens and avoiding transgressions.

This has its counterpart in the Babylonian almanacs, where the instructions for each day are often followed by the assurance 'his heart will be happy' (if he does this), or 'there will be joy of heart'.¹⁵⁶

The reference to bird omens in the last line of the poem points forward to the *Ornithomancy* which once followed the *Works and Days* and which we are told that Apollonius Rhodius declared spurious. His grounds were probably not such as would have persuaded us, and we are left with the tantalizing possibility that Hesiod wrote a further section about divination from birds. As we saw in chapter 1, this is another branch of Near Eastern learning. It was fitting that it should be treated systematically together with the *Days*.

We find in Aristotle a curious criticism of Hesiod for having described 'the eagle that presides over divination' as drinking (something that birds with talons do not do, according to Aristotle); he says that this error was committed 'in his account of the siege of Nineveh'.¹⁵⁷ It is

¹⁵⁴ Langdon, *op. cit.*, 54; W. R. Dawson, *JEA* 12, 1926, 260–4.

¹⁵⁵ *Op.* 825; E. I. Gordon (as ch. 2, n. 75), 281; S. Langdon, *ZA* 28, 1914, 107. 5 (as later misunderstanding).

¹⁵⁶ *Op.* 826–8; Langdon, *op. cit.*, 83. From a later period we could compare Ecclus. 50. 28. 'Blessed is he who shall be exercised in these things; and by taking them to heart he will become wise'.

¹⁵⁷ Arist. *Hist. Anim.* 601a31 ff. = *Hes. fr.* 364.

hard to conceive how this historical event—presumably the sack of Nineveh by the Medes in 612—could have come to be described in the *Ornithomancy* or any of the other poems ascribed to Hesiod in antiquity, and scholars have sought without success for a plausible emendation of the name 'Hesiod'. But after all, we know very little of the *Ornithomancy*. If it did contain a reference to the fall of Nineveh, it would follow that the ascription to Hesiod was false, but on the other hand, its poet's awareness of Assyria would be strikingly demonstrated.

CONCLUSION

Hemerology and bird omens; elements of the form, style, and substance of the Semitic wisdom poem; animal fable; the myth of the four metallic ages; the myths of the succession of kings of heaven, the defeat of a monster by the storm-god, and the imprisoning of the Former Gods below the earth, in a poem divinely revealed: Hesiod displays a truly extraordinary accumulation of oriental materials. Whatever currents were bringing them to Greece, he seems to have been peculiarly well placed to collect them. We shall consider the question of transmission more closely in the last chapter.

Besides the *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, and *Ornithomancy* a dozen or so further poems were attributed to Hesiod in antiquity. Some of them were certainly inauthentic, and they all may have been. They call for no more than a few brief notes here.

The *Wedding of Keyx* appears to have contained some riddles, or one complex riddle, which there is some slight reason to think that Heracles propounded at the wedding feast.¹⁵⁸ It may seem an odd role for Heracles. But he, if anyone, may be called the Greek Samson, and it was Samson who, after killing a lion, went on to propound the most famous riddle in Near Eastern literature—at a wedding feast.¹⁵⁹ The situation is different, of course, in that Samson was the bridegroom, whereas Heracles was a self-invited guest. Nor have we any reason to suspect that the riddling at Keyx's wedding led to any such dissension and drama as in Samson's case.

The *Astronomy* may have been another work which owed something to Babylonian technical learning. We saw in chapter 1 that many of the Greek names for the constellations correspond to the Akkadian names,

and it was in poems such as the 'Hesiodic' *Astronomy* that some of these must have made their first appearance in literature.

Two other poems of the didactic category were the *Megala Erga* or *Great(er) Works* and the *Precepts of Chiron*. One of the two lines quoted from the *Megala Erga* is the maxim 'If one should sow evil, he would reap evil profits'. The same metaphor of sowing and reaping is used to similar effect in several Old Testament utterances, for example, 'He who sows unrighteousness will reap trouble'.¹⁶⁰

The *Precepts of Chiron* were addressed to Achilles and supposedly a record of the instruction given to the young hero by the avuncular centaur. In the *Suda* Chiron receives a biographical entry, derived from Hesychius of Miletus, where he is solemnly identified as the author of the *Precepts*, as well as of a work on hippiatrics. It may be irrelevant, but it is certainly startling to find, in a list of literary texts and authors from Assurbanipal's library, mention of a work written 'at the dictation of a horse'.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ 'Hes.' fr. 286; Prov. 22. 8, cf. Job 4. 8, Hos. 8. 7, 10. 13; Brown, 317 f.

¹⁶¹ *Suda* χ 267 (iv. 803. 3 Adler); W. G. Lambert, *JCS* 16, 1962, 66 vi 17. Unfortunately the title of the Akkadian work is not preserved and we cannot determine its nature.

¹⁵⁸ 'Hes.' fr. 266-8; R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, *Rh. Mus.* 108, 1965, 307-16.

¹⁵⁹ *Jdg.* 14. 12 ff. For Heracles and Samson see below, chapter 9.

7 The Iliad

The *Iliad*'s title may suggest an epic about the Trojan War, or even the classic epic about the Trojan War. But although the tale is set at Troy during the war, and much fighting is described, the city's fate remains in the background. It is not the real theme. The poem does not tell of the capture or sack of Troy, or of any major stage in the progress of the war. It is true that the death of Troy's greatest defender, Hector, forms its climax. But this gain for the Achaeans' cause was achieved at high cost and it was soon to be cancelled out by the loss of their own supreme hero, Achilles.

In fact, the *Iliad* is primarily about Achilles, that splendid, doomed figure who stands out above all the rest. The poet defines his theme as the wrath of Achilles; he might have caught it more completely if he had had the vocabulary to say 'the emotional journey of Achilles'. Besides his wrath against Agamemnon, the original μῆνις which he sustains through three quarters of the poem, Achilles experiences a series of other strong emotions, and expresses them without restraint: tearful self-pity at his humiliation by Agamemnon; fretful longing for the fighting once he has absented himself from it; overwhelming grief at the death of Patroclus; implacable fury against Hector, not appeased even when he has killed him. A final emotional shakeout with Priam restores him to a more balanced view of things. It is this suite of emotions and mood-changes that gives the *Iliad* its artistic unity, determining its beginning, its end, and its basic structural framework.

Behind the *Iliad* stands a centuries-old tradition of Greek martial epic. The formulaic vocabulary for armour and weapons, for killing and wounding, for chariotry and massed fighting, for heroes who are sackers of cities or famed with the spear, and the notional poetic ideal of celebrating κλέα ἀνδρῶν, the renowned deeds of men, suggest a conventional emphasis on battles and heroic accomplishments in the field. Seen against this presumed traditional background, the *Iliad* seems to represent a remarkable shift of focus. The conventional matter is there in abundance, and the poet shows that it is quite to his taste and that he knows perfectly well how to draw upon it and fill it with new life. But he uses it largely as the backdrop to a human drama in which actions are less important than the emotions they arouse, and the psychological case-history of an individual occupies the foreground. There is a pervasive

... of mortality and of the ultimate futility and tragedy of war which is to subvert the received values of heroic poetry. Achilles himself flouts them—why not cut loose and take the option of a long, quiet life? Would it not be a good thing if strife disappeared from the world?—though in the end he cannot escape them: we may suppose that the force of tradition was too strong for the poet to allow that.

Achilles has often been seen as a relative newcomer in the evolution of the Trojan saga. Many things set him apart. He is the son of a goddess, the only goddess ever to have gone through a formal wedding ceremony with a mortal. He is brought up in the wild by a Centaur. He is the only major hero among the Achaeans to come from northern Greece; in the Catalogue of Ships his contingent appears among those appended to the main series, out of geographical sequence. According to some accounts he was not among the original army that gathered at Aulis, having been too young to be a suitor of Helen and so not bound, as the other leaders were, by the suitors' oath; he was fetched in afterwards from Scyros. He does not take part in the sack of Troy, because, alone of the major leaders, he is killed too soon. The prominent heroes whom he kills—Hector, Penthesileia, Memnon—themselves appear to be later elements in the tradition. For all the intensely human qualities with which the *Iliad* poet portrays him, he remains in some ways on a different plane from the other heroes: he receives visits from his divine mother and converses with her at length, he wears armour specially forged for him by Hephaestus, he has horses of supernatural pedigree who are capable of speaking to him, he fights against a river.²

We have, then, a special kind of hero and a special kind of story, treated in the traditional medium of hexameter epic and set in the fashionable context of the Trojan War, but themselves in important respects untraditional, even anti-traditional. The individuality of Achilles is, no doubt, to some extent due to his provenance from a separate tradition of Aeolic saga. But we must also reckon with the influence of themes imported from further afield—from the Near East. A number of scholars have been struck by the parallels between Achilles and Gilgamesh, and more specifically the Gilgamesh of the twelve-tablet Akkadian epic which we name after him. These parallels are indeed impressive, and in a chapter concerned with oriental elements in the *Iliad* they deserve to be addressed first.³

¹ Il. 9. 398–416, 18. 107.

² Cf. Wilamowitz, *Sitz.-Ber. Preuss. Ak.* 1925, 239–41 = *Kl. Schr.* v(2), 120–4; Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1946, 71–6.

³ For previous comparisons see esp. Dirlmeier (1955); Szabó (1956); Webster (1956) and (1958) 82; Petriconi (1964); Gresseth (1975); Wilson (1986); M. Reichel in B. Brogyanyi and R.

There are initial similarities in the origins and destinies of the two heroes. Gilgamesh is the son of a goddess, the wise and all-knowing Ninsun ('Lady Wild-cow'), and of a mortal father, identified in the epic as Lugalbanda, king of Uruk. Because of this parentage he is stated to be two-thirds divine. He comes close to obtaining eternal life, or at least perpetual youth, but he cannot in the end escape the limitations of mortality. Achilles is the son of the goddess Thetis, who has foreknowledge of his destiny, and of Peleus, king of Iolcus. He belongs to the class of ἡμίθεοι, 'half-gods', so called because of their descent from unions of gods with mortals. He knows that he has to die, like everyone else, but there is a peculiar poignancy about his mortality. According to post-Homeric legend, Thetis had been engaged in making the infant Achilles immortal by boiling or burning him, when Peleus, not understanding what was going on, had interrupted the operation.⁴

In the story of Gilgamesh his father remains out of sight, while his divine mother plays a significant role in the early stages. She interprets two dreams for him, explaining what they signify for his future, namely the coming of a man who will be his great friend and helper. He consults her again after Enkidu appears, and she advises him. When he and Enkidu are preparing to set out on their expedition to Humbaba's distant forest, they go to tell Ninsun; she then goes to intercede with a higher god, Shamash, on his behalf. Similarly in the *Iliad* Achilles' aged father, though mentioned occasionally, is far from the scene of action and takes no part in it, whereas his divine mother more than once comes to converse with him, giving him advice and assistance. She tells him of things that are going to happen, and when the first crisis in his affairs arises, after speaking with him she goes to intercede with Zeus on his behalf.⁵

Gilgamesh is outstanding in physical beauty and strength. We expect as much from a famous hero. But what is more noteworthy is his

character, which is individual. He is presented at the outset of the epic as bold, overbearing, and impulsive. When the prostitute Shamhat tells Enkidu about him, she describes him as *hadi-ū'a amēlu*. This unique expression means literally 'a rejoice/alas man', that is, one inclined to extreme shifts of emotion; it is the best possible Akkadian rendering of 'a sensitive depressive'.⁶ In the later course of the narrative we see him bitterly crying at his inability to out-wrestle Enkidu; impetuously accepting the advice of the elders of Uruk not to go on the Humbaba expedition; making a tearful prayer to Shamash before the fight; exulting and making merry after his return to Uruk; prostrated with grief at Enkidu's death; wandering dejected at the ends of the earth; making a quite unprovoked assault on Ur-shanabi, the boatman who alone can get him across the Waters of Death, and smashing his equipment; weeping again at the loss of the rejuvenating plant. Achilles too is handsome and strong, and above all distinguished by his emotionalism. He stands out among the Achaeans as their own *hadi-ū'a amēlu*.

The major unifying theme in the first two thirds of the Akkadian epic is Gilgamesh's great friendship with Enkidu, terminated by the latter's death. Gilgamesh is devastated by this, and after profuse lamentation, and a funeral that he postpones by many days, he resolves on an ambitious undertaking: a pilgrimage to the distant abode of Ut-napishtim. He remains in a distraught state as he carries out his plan, but in the end he becomes resigned and achieves peace of mind, returning to his city a sadder and wiser man. In the *Iliad* Achilles' great friend Patroclus does not play such a conspicuous role as Enkidu until Book 16, when he goes out to fight in Achilles' armour and is killed; but he is introduced in Book 1, and a constant presence in Achilles' company. Achilles is devastated by his death, and abandons himself to lamentation; the funeral is postponed, and does not take place for two days. Achilles grimly determines to catch and kill Patroclus' slayer. He remains in a wild, inhuman frame of mind until he has accomplished this, and indeed afterwards. Only in the last book is his extravagant fury towards Hector assuaged; his meeting with Priam brings him to a more philosophical acceptance of the human condition, and he resigns himself to the resumption of his normal (wartime) routine. As J. R. Wilson puts it, Achilles has in the end, like Gilgamesh, to retreat from the extreme position that his loss has driven him into.⁷

In the Sumerian Gilgamesh poems where Enkidu appears, he is represented as Gilgamesh's servant or slave, and he addresses him as

Lipp (edd.), *Historical Philology: Greek, Latin and Romance* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 87), Amsterdam & Philadelphia 1992, 187–208. The reader may find it helpful at this point to refer back to the brief account of the Gilgamesh epic given above, pp. 65 f.

⁴ *Gilg.* I i 33 f., ii 1, v 38–40, etc.; *Il.* 1. 416–18, 9. 410–16, 16. 36 f./50 f., 18. 96, 132 f., 21. 276–8; 'Hes.' *Aegimius* fr. 300, *Lyc.* 178 f., *Ap. Rhod.* 4. 866–79, *Apollod.* 3. 13. 6; cf. Szabó, 69. The version in which Thetis dips Achilles in the Styx first appears in Statius (*Ach.* 1. 133 f., 269 f., 480 f.), but it may be implied by Archaic vases which show him shot in the ankle: see Gantz, 625–8.

⁵ *Gilg.* I v 25–v1 27 (= OBV Pennsylvania fr., 1), *Il.* iii, iii i 13–ii; *Il.* 1. 348 ff., 18. 65–147, 19. 1–39. Cf. Webster (1958), 82, 'Achilles is unique in the *Iliad*; he is the only hero who is unthinkable without his mother and his friend'; 119 f., 'the relationship between Zeus, Thetis, Achilles, and Patroklos is so like the relationship between Shamash, Ninsun, Gilgamesh, and Enkidu in the Gilgamesh story that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion ...'.

⁶ *Gilg.* I ii 2–29, iv 38 f., v 14–19.

⁷ Wilson (1986), 41. For comparisons of the friendship motif in the Gilgamesh epic and the *Iliad* see esp. Szabó, 58–67; Wilson, 28–31.

'my king'. This version of the relationship still appears in Tablet XII of the Babylonian epic, which, it may be recalled, is an inorganic accretion derived directly from a Sumerian original. But in the main body of the poem the two men are equals, and address one another consistently as 'my friend'. In the *Iliad* Patroclus is officially subordinate to Achilles; he is described as his *θεράπων*, commonly translated 'squire', and he is at his beck and call. At the same time the two are equal partners in friendship. Achilles is Patroclus' φίλος ἐταῖρος, his dear comrade, and Patroclus is Achilles'.⁸

These, then, are the main features of the parallelism between Achilles and Gilgamesh. The *mise en scène* is quite different in the two epics. Gilgamesh is based in his own city of Uruk, from where he makes a couple of long excursions to remote lands, whereas Achilles is taking part in a war on foreign soil. But upon these different backdrops is projected a remarkably similar personal drama: a man of abnormally emotional temperament, with a solicitous goddess for a mother and a comrade to whom he is devoted, is devastated by the latter's death and plunges into a new course of action in an unbalanced state of mind, eventually to recover his equilibrium. Similar too is the overall ethos, the sense of heroic man brought face to face with issues of life and death, railing against mortality but coming to understand and accept it. It is this ethos, more than the exotic mythology, that gives the Gilgamesh epic its singular appeal to the modern reader, an appeal unmatched by the other Akkadian narrative poems. It has been called the first great embodiment of humanism—a title that others would willingly bestow on the *Iliad*.⁹

More detailed comparisons. Ninsun and Thetis

These broad comparisons can be supplemented by a series of more detailed parallels which establish beyond any question that we are dealing not with merely coincidental analogies between the two great epics but with historical connections.

When Briseïs is taken away from Achilles, he breaks into tears, goes off by himself (δακρύσας ἐτάρων ἄφαρ ἔξετο νόσφι λιασθείς), and prays to his mother for help. We find an exactly similar motif in the Twelfth Tablet of the Gilgamesh epic, when Enkidu fails to return from the underworld:

Then the son of Ninsun [went], weeping for his servant Enkidu;
to [Ekur], the house of Ellil, he went on his own.

⁸ *Gilgamesh and Agga* 42, *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (version A) 3, 8, al. (trs. D. O. Edzard, ZA 80, 1990, 183); Shaffer, 21 f.; *Gilg.* XII 54; *Il.* 16. 165, 244, etc.; 1. 345, 18. 80, etc.

⁹ Cf. Gresseth, 16; Burkert (1992), 117 f.

'Father [Ellil], today ...', etc.

His prayer to Ellil gets no response, so he tries again at Sin's temple, and at Ea's; Ea tells him what he must do.¹⁰

After hearing her son's petition, Thetis exclaims:

'Oh, my child, why did I raise you after that unlucky birth?

If only you could be sitting without tears and hurt

by the ships, since your allotment is but brief, not at all for long.

As it is, you are both short-lived and miserable

above all men; under such an ill fate I gave you birth.'

Later, when she intercedes with Zeus on his behalf, she repeats the complaint that he is ὠκυμορώτατος ἄλλων, destined to a particularly early death. These reactions on the part of the hero's divine mother recall those of Ninsun when Gilgamesh tells her of his determination to undertake the dangerous journey to the Cedar Forest to kill Humbaba. She goes before Shamash, makes an offering to him, and asks

'Why did you fix (it so) for my son Gilgamesh, (and) lay a
restless heart upon him?

Now you have touched him, and he will go
the distant road, where Humbaba is,' etc.¹¹

Patroclus' sortie

On Thetis' advice Achilles withdraws from participation in the war and remains in his quarters. Later on, however, the desperate military situation persuades him to accept a proposal of Nestor's and send Patroclus out to battle while he himself stays where he is. It has not, I think, been observed that this has something of a precedent in *Gilgamesh and Agga*, the only one of the Sumerian Gilgamesh poems that shows the hero in a war. Agga, the king of Kish, sails down the Euphrates to Uruk and lays siege to it. Gilgamesh's position here is the converse of Achilles' in the *Iliad*: he is the king of the besieged city, and like Priam he does not himself take part in the fighting, while Agga is the attacker who stays in his quarters in a ship moored at a little distance. After an unsuccessful sortie by another warrior, Gilgamesh shows himself on the city wall, creating a great impression on the beholders, while his servant Enkidu sallies forth from the gate. Enkidu drives the enemy before him, forces his way through to Agga's vessel, and takes him captive.

¹⁰ *Il.* 1. 348 ff. (the motif is also used with Calchas at 1. 34 ff.); *Gilg.* XII 54 ff. Tearful prayers are not unusual in Akkadian literature, cf. *Gilg.* VII ii 49, *Etana* II 60, *BWL* 200. 19, *CPLM* no. 32 recto 38; Hecker, 178 f.

¹¹ *Il.* 1. 414–18, 505, cf. 18. 54–62; *Gilg.* III ii 10; compared by Webster (1956), 114.

Enkidu's sortie has a successful outcome, unlike Patroclus'; yet the story ends paradoxically with Gilgamesh releasing Agga and acknowledging his overlordship. It seems that the poets of Uruk played down what was in fact the city's humiliation, and represented the outcome as a triumph for Gilgamesh followed by an act of magnanimity. Besides the inverted parallel of the general situation (city attacked by water-borne aggressor, Gilgamesh remaining inside his city, Agga remaining in his ship) and the incomplete parallel of Enkidu's and Patroclus' sorties (subordinate heroes driving off the enemy, who are pressing close round the ramparts), we cannot help remarking that Gilgamesh's awe-inspiring appearance on the wall has its counterpart in *Iliad* 18. 203 ff., where the fight is on for Patroclus' body and Achilles, a divine flame flaring from his head, appears from behind the defensive wall and gives three mighty shouts, striking terror into the Trojans.

The lamentations

Book 18, in which Achilles learns of Patroclus' death and is thrown into a paroxysm of grief, shows particularly close parallels of detail with the Akkadian Gilgamesh epic. His initial reaction on hearing the news consists in impulsive acts of self-mortification. He seizes dust and ashes with both hands and pours them on his head, dirtying his face and clothes; he hurls himself down in the dust; he tears his hair. Of Gilgamesh lamenting Enkidu we read that

He was tearing out and scattering (his) curly locks,
he was ripping off and discarding (his) finery [as if it were] taboo.

But such acts of self-abasement are typical of the ancient Near East and can be illustrated also from Ugaritic literature and from the Old Testament.¹² A little later the Gilgamesh parallels stand out more clearly. Thetis asks Achilles why he is so wretched, when Zeus has fulfilled his wishes and caused the Achaeans to be penned back to the ships. He replies:

'Mother, the Olympian has indeed brought that to pass;
but what pleasure is there in that for me, when my dear comrade is lost,
Patroclus, whom I esteemed above all my comrades,
no less than my own head?'

¹² *Il.* 18. 22-7 (similar behaviour by Hector's parents, 22. 405-14); *Gilg* VIII ii 22 f. Tearing clothes, pouring dust on head: Josh. 7. 6, 1 Sam. 4. 12, 2 Sam. 1. 2, 13. 19, 15. 22, Lam. 2. 10, Job 2. 8, 12, etc. (Bogan, 168 f.; Krenkel, 35); *KTU* 1. 5 vi 14-16; *Ahiqar* 41 p. 213 Cowley; Nabonidus inscr. H1 B iii 25 ff. (C. J. Gadd, *An. Stud.* 8, 1958, 52, 55 f.). For the combination of dust and ashes (κόινος, τέφρη) cf. Job 42. 6 'al- 'āpār wā'ēper (Bogan 169). Rolling in dust, ashes, dung, etc.: Jer. 6. 26 (Bogan 215), 25. 34, Ezek. 27. 30, Mic. 1. 10 (Gordon [1962], 268).

When Gilgamesh arrives at the house of the alewife Siduri and identifies himself as the great Gilgamesh who has destroyed Humbaba, killed mountain lions, and struck down the Bull of Heaven, she asks him why, if he is the man who has achieved all that, he looks so wasted and worn down as if by grief. He answers, how could he not be in this condition?

'My friend, whom I love greatly, who underwent every hardship with me,
Enkidu, whom I love greatly, who underwent every hardship with me—
the fate of mankind has overtaken him.'¹³

Achilles goes on to tell Thetis that he too will soon be dead, for he has no desire to go on living, unless to make sure that Hector is slain first. He will accept his fate whenever the gods will. After all, not even Hercules escaped death:

'So I also, if indeed a similar fate is set for me,
will be laid down when I die.'¹⁴

Gilgamesh too moves straight from lamentation of his friend's death to anticipation of his own:

'Am I not like him? I shall lay me down
and never rise again for all time.'¹⁵

In his case it is not, as with Achilles, a *desire* to die, just a realization that he must. But this recognition of the universality of death plays a part in Achilles' speech too; his argument from the case of Heracles—'if indeed a similar fate is set for me'—is strikingly similar to Gilgamesh's from the case of Enkidu, 'am I not like him?'

Presently, after Patroclus' body is recovered from the battlefield, the poet describes how the Achaeans lamented him through the night,

and the son of Peleus led them in their heavy wailing,
laying his man slaying hands on his comrade's chest,
groaning again and again, like a full-bearded lion
whose cubs a huntsman snatches away
from the dense woodland, and it comes later, and is chagrined,
and it roams many a glen seeking after the man's tracks,

¹³ *Il.* 18. 70-82; *Gilg.* X i 35-ii 5 (restored from parallel passages in X iii-v).

¹⁴ *Il.* 18. 88-121, cf. 329-32.

¹⁵ *Gilg.* X ii 13 f. = iii 31 = v 23, cf. IX i 3. Some take the second sentence as another question, 'Shall I lay me down ...?' But there is nothing to indicate this in the Akkadian, and if it were a question we might expect a negative again, 'Shall I not lay me down ...?' There are other places in Semitic literature where someone lamenting a death declares that s/he too will die: *KTU* 1. 5 vi 24 = 6 i 7 'After Baal I (we) will go down into the earth'; Gen. 37. 35.

hoping to find him, for it is in the grip of bitter anger—
so he groaned deep, and spoke among the Myrmidons.¹⁶

In the Gilgamesh epic Enkidu dies at the end of Tablet VII. The last twenty or thirty lines are lost, but they apparently contained reference to something happening during the night, since Tablet VIII begins with the appearance of dawn. Its first column is filled by a rhetorical lament which Gilgamesh addresses to his friend. There is no sign that anyone else is present. But then he continues:

'Hearken to me, young men, hearken to me;
hearken to me, you elders of [Uruk.]
I weep for my friend Enkidu;
like a woman mourner I lament (him) bitterly.'

He has already said that the elders and the young men of Uruk will be weeping for Enkidu, and now he is, as it were, leading them in their lament, just as Achilles is said to lead the Achaeans in theirs. After a few more lines he turns back to Enkidu:

'You there, turn to me! Don't you hear [me?]
But he did not raise his head.
He touched his heart, but it was not beating at all.
He veiled <his> friend's face like a bride's.
Like an eagle he circled over him;
like a lioness whose cub[s are caught] in a pitfall
he kept turning to and fro.'¹⁷

Two things here arrest our attention. Firstly, Gilgamesh touches Enkidu's heart to see if it is still beating. Achilles lays his hands on Patroclus' chest: only why? There is no possible question of his still having a trace of life in him. This seems to be a detail that has been taken over from the source version and has lost its rationale.¹⁸ Secondly, the simile of the lion or lioness deprived of cubs is matched in the *Iliad* passage. There it is a male lion; in the Akkadian epic the copies vary between *nēši* 'lion' and *nēšti* 'lioness', but the sex of the creature in any case matters little. A slightly more serious difference between the two similes is that in Achilles' case it is his deep groaning that is compared to

¹⁶ *Il.* 18.316–23.

¹⁷ *Gilg.* VIII ii 1–4, 15–21. The next two lines (22 f., about Gilgamesh tearing his hair, etc.) have been quoted above. In lines 17–22 a variant text from Sultantepe gives first-person verbs instead of third-person: 'I touch ... My friend has veiled his face ... I circled ... I keep turning ... I tear out and scatter ...'; it also gives 'lion' instead of 'lioness'.

¹⁸ The line (18.317) recurs at 23.18, where Achilles leads another lament. If this is not a 'concordance interpolation', it shows that the poet took the gesture to be an appropriate one for a formal lament. But it does not appear in the laments for Hector in 24.719–76.

the lion's, whereas with Gilgamesh it is his restless pacing this way and that. However, the motif of the lion's restless roaming does appear in the development of the Homeric simile, even though it no longer corresponds to what Achilles is described as doing.¹⁹

The worm. The gods' choice

After addressing some lines of lament to the Myrmidons, Achilles turns to address his dead comrade—just as Gilgamesh turns back from addressing the men of Uruk to the dead Enkidu. Achilles tells Patroclus that he will not carry out his funeral until he has killed Hector. The next morning, having received a new set of equipment from Thetis, he arms for battle. But (he tells her) he is worried that flies may get into Patroclus' wounds and engender worms that will ravage the body. She promises to protect it and keep it uncorrupted, and she does so, using a small drip of ambrosia and nectar. Gilgamesh too postpones the burial of his friend, and here again the postponement is associated with the motif of the worm. As the hero relates to Siduri and others,

For six days and seven nights I wept over him:
I did not give him for burial
until a worm fell from his nose.

The horrid realism of the older story has been refined away by the Greek poet. He has banished the appalling worm, but not forgotten it.²⁰

As Achilles chases Hector round the walls of Troy, Zeus invites the gods to consider whether to save this pious man from death—he has often made sacrifice on the peaks of Ida—or to let Achilles kill him. Athena is outraged by the suggestion of saving him and protests, whereupon Zeus backs down. The poet has, of course, already used virtually the same scene in the battle between Patroclus and Sarpedon, and that may seem the primary version, as Zeus has more obvious reason to wish for his own son to be saved. But already in the Gilgamesh epic we find a passage where the gods debate which of two heroes is to die. They are not heroes locked in combat; they are Gilgamesh and Enkidu, who have together killed both Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. Anu declares that one of them must die. Enlil proposes that it should be

¹⁹ The similes have been compared by (among others) Szabó, 62 f.; Webster (1956), 114, and (1958), 224 f. Long before anything was known of Mesopotamian literature, the Homeric simile was compared with certain Old Testament similes in which an enraged man (or God) is compared to a bear robbed of her cubs: 2 Sam. 17.8, Hos. 13.8; cf. Prov. 17.12 (Bogan, 174). These are worth noting, though the contexts are much less close than in the Gilgamesh case.

²⁰ *Il.* 18.334 f., 19.23–39; *Gilg.* X ii 5 f., restored from parallel passages (≈ iii 24 f. ≈ v 14–16 ≈ OBV Meissner fr., ii 5–9). Cf. Szabó, 63–5; Wilson, 33 f.

Enkidu. Shamash protests that Enkidu is without guilt, but Enlil angrily overrules him.²¹ So as in the two Homeric passages, the question of the victim's innocence is brought into the discussion as a reason for sparing him, but this is indignantly dismissed by another deity. The pattern is so similar that it seems unlikely that the Iliadic passages have an independent origin, given that the poem shows so many links with the Gilgamesh epic. Perhaps, when the motif was taken over into the Greek epic, it was first applied to the death of Patroclus, who is in general the counterpart of Enkidu. But this became awkward when the poet decided he wanted to apply it to Hector's death too, for if the gods had already chosen to spare Hector in his encounter with Patroclus, it might seem odd for them to condemn him in his encounter with Achilles. It was possible to avoid the awkwardness by displacing the scene in Book 16 from the Hector-Patroclus combat to the Patroclus-Sarpedon one.

Hugging the ghost. Recollection of shared hardships

When Achilles falls asleep in the night after he has killed Hector, the soul of Patroclus appears to him in a dream. It appeals to him for prompt burial, prophesies his death at Troy, and urges him to have his bones laid together with Patroclus' own. Achilles wants to embrace him, and tries to, but there is nothing to take hold of: the soul slips away below the earth like a vapour. Achilles starts up, exclaiming, 'Oh, so there really is in the house of Hades a soul and a spectre, but no consciousness.' There is a parallel scene in the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus, after conversing with his mother's soul in the underworld, tries three times to embrace it, and is equally unsuccessful. He asks why she is being so elusive: is it just a phantom that he sees before him? She explains that this is how it is with the dead. The body falls apart (οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ σάρκας τε καὶ ὅστέα ἵνα ἔχουσιν) and is consumed by the funeral pyre, while the soul flies off and floats about like a dream.

In Tablet XII of the Gilgamesh epic, after Enkidu has fallen captive to the underworld, Gilgamesh seeks help from various gods, and Enlil advises him to open up a hole in the earth so that Enkidu's ghost (*utukku*) can come up. He makes the hole, and the ghost duly comes up 'like a wind'.

They embraced, they did not let go;
they debated, they wore themselves down.

²¹ Il. 22. 167 ff., 16. 431 ff. (cf. the variant of the theme in 20. 291 ff.); *Gilg.* VII init., supplied from the Hittite version (but the presence of the episode in the SBV is guaranteed by the catchline at the end of VI); compared by Webster (1956), 114. For another divine council in which a man's innocence is taken into account in considering his fate cf. Job 1. 9 f. (adduced by Bogan, 391).

'Tell me, my friend, tell me, my friend,
tell me earth's ordinance that you have seen.'

Enkidu then tells Gilgamesh about the condition of the dead, starting with '[your wife] whom you rejoiced to touch' and whose body the vermin now devour.²²

The episode relates in different ways to each of the two Homeric passages. In both we have the motif of embracing the ghost, though the Greek poets more realistically represent it as an insubstantial wraith that eludes the living man's arms. In both the encounter leaves the hero with a better understanding of the nature of death, though the *Odyssey* passage is closer to the Akkadian epic in that the ghost itself gives an account of what death means, referring specifically to the dissolution of the body. It is closer too inasmuch as Odysseus' mother's ghost (like the others he meets) has been summoned up by a special ritual that he has performed for the purpose. The trench that he had to dig can be compared with the hole which Gilgamesh opens in the earth.²³ On the other hand, Achilles' relation to Patroclus corresponds more exactly with Gilgamesh's to Enkidu; the *Iliad* episode takes its place in the long, coherent series of parallels between the stories of the two pairs of heroes.

As night falls after Patroclus' funeral and funeral games, the poet again depicts Achilles' restless grieving in terms that recall that of Gilgamesh. As Gilgamesh 'kept turning to and fro' like the anguished lion, so Achilles, after tossing and turning in bed (ἐστρέφετ' ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα), would get up and wander distractedly this way and that (δινεύεσκ' ὁλόων) on the seashore.²⁴ He wept as he recalled all the hardships that he had endured together with Patroclus, the battles, the voyaging over wild seas:

ἦ δ' ὅποσα τολύπευσε σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ πάθεν ἄλγεα,
ἀνδρῶν τε πτολέμους ἀλεγεινά τε κύματα πείρων.

So Gilgamesh recalls how

we met together and climbed the mountain,
we seized the Bull of Heaven and slew it,
we destroyed Humbaba, who dwelt in the Cedar Forest,
we killed lions in the mountain passes:
my friend whom I love greatly, who underwent every hardship with me,

²² Il. 23. 62-107, *Od.* 11. 204-24; *Gilg.* XII 76 ff.; Dirlmeier, 33; Szabó, 65 f. On the ghost like a wind cf. above, p. 151.

²³ Ungnad, 137; Stella (1955), 224, 248.

²⁴ Il. 24. 5-13; *Gilg.* VIII ii 20 f.

Enkidu, whom I love greatly, who underwent every hardship with me.²⁵

Strange meeting

Finally I should like to suggest that Achilles' strange and wonderful encounter with Priam, which brings his prolonged frenzy to an end and makes him see things in a more balanced and resigned way, owes something to Gilgamesh's meeting with Ut-napishtim. In themselves, of course, the persons of Priam the king of Troy and Ut-napishtim the survivor of the Flood have little in common. Nor do their meetings with the respective heroes of the two epics come about in similar ways. Gilgamesh makes a very long and difficult journey to see Ut-napishtim, Priam makes a short (but also difficult and dangerous) journey to see Achilles. There is nevertheless an analogy.

Ut-napishtim, to Gilgamesh, is a famous personage from a former generation, and it is only after Enkidu's death that Gilgamesh conceives the extraordinary idea of going to seek out this man who is reputed to have attained eternal life. When he eventually comes face to face with him, he is surprised to find that he is not 'other':

'I look at you, Ut-napishtim,
and your form is not other—you are just like me—
indeed you yourself are not other—you are just like me!'²⁶

Ut-napishtim tells him the story of the Flood, which ended with Enlil conferring immortality upon him and his wife. The point is that he has immortality not because he is of different clay from Gilgamesh but as a result of the special circumstances of his life. Gilgamesh has to realize that his own lot is the common one of mankind.

Priam, to Achilles, is a very senior figure from a world outside his own, a man whose name has long been familiar to him, whom he may have seen up on the city wall, but whom he has never met and perhaps never envisaged meeting. He is astonished to see this man appearing face to face with him on his own level. Priam immediately appeals to him to think of his own old father and to understand his (Priam's) situation by comparison with Peleus'. Achilles is deeply moved. For a while both men weep, Priam for Hector, Achilles alternately for his father and for Patroclus. By the time dialogue is resumed, Achilles has come to see Priam as a suffering mortal like himself, subject to the ills with which the gods afflict all mankind.

²⁵ *Il.* 24. 7 f., cf. 18. 341 f.; *Gilg.* VIII ii 11-13, X iii 17-22 ≈ v 8-13 ≈ OBV Meissner fr., ii 1-3 (Szabó 63).

²⁶ *Gilg.* XI 2-4.

Come, sit down on a chair, and let us leave
our woes in our heart's store, despite our grief:
there is no benefit in chill lament.
This fate the gods have spun for wretched mortals,
to live in grief, while they are free from cares.

These reflections are much like those which Ut-napishtim offers to Gilgamesh before he tells him about the Flood:

[Why have y]ou gone sleepless? What have you gained?
[By going s]leepless you have wearied [yourself];
you fill your flesh with lamentation ...
The Anunnaki, the great gods, were in assem[bly]:
Mammetum, she who makes fates, was fixing fates with them:
they established death and life.
Death's days they did not define (i.e. limit), life's they defined.²⁷

After hearing what Ut-napishtim has to tell him, Gilgamesh knows that death is his unavoidable lot—'In my bedchamber there sits death; indeed, wherever I set [my feet], that is death'²⁸—and that there is nothing for it but to go back to Uruk and carry on as before. Similarly, Achilles knows that the weary burden of fighting has to be resumed, and that he himself has death hanging over him. Each arrives at this state of philosophic acceptance as a result of meeting and conversing with an older man whom he had thought of as 'other' but who (he is made to realize) is actually a mirror of himself. And it is the achievement of this state of mind that marks the conclusion of the story. The Greek poet does not go on to tell of Achilles' death, although he has often foretold it and it now lies not far off; nor does Sin-leqe-unninni go on to tell of Gilgamesh's.²⁹

MISCELLANEA ORIENTALIA

If the Gilgamesh complex, as we may call it, accounts for major elements in the *Iliad*'s plot, structure, and ethos, there remains far more that can be cited from Near Eastern sources to throw light on the narrative of the epic. Some of it has been adduced in the studies of poetic thought, technique, and diction in chapters 3-5, and will need to be recalled only briefly. Other material relates more to specific passages. The simplest

²⁷ *Il.* 24. 522-6; *Gilg.* X vi 15-17, 36-9.

²⁸ *Gilg.* XI 232 f.

²⁹ Cf. Petriconi, 340.

and most economical way of presenting it will be in commentary format, going through the books of the *Iliad* in order and providing concise disconnected notes on the points in question as they arise. Source references and secondary literature will be cited in the body of the text rather than in footnotes.

1. 1-492: Achilles' wrath

1. 5. 'And the plan of Zeus was fulfilled.' This is the plan adopted by Zeus on Thetis' proposal in 517-30, to grant the Trojans supremacy over the Achaeans until Achilles is restored to honour. The interpretation of national victories or defeats as reflecting a divine plan or purpose is familiar to the Hebrew prophets: Isa. 14. 24-7,

The Lord of Hosts has sworn, saying
'As I have planned, so shall it be,
and as I have purposed, so shall it stand forth—
to smash Assyria in my land, and on my mountains trample her ...
This is the purpose that is purposed over all the earth,
and this is the hand stretched out over all the nations.'

Cf. 25. 1-3, 46. 10-13, Jer. 29. 11, 49. 20, 50. 45, 51. 29, Mic. 4. 11 f. Esarhaddon records in an inscription (Borger, 13) that 'Marduk, the Enlil of the gods, was angry and devised (*iktapud*) evil to level the land and destroy its people'. See in general B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, Lund 1967, 68-97.

1. 34-52. Chryses' prayer and Apollo's response. The action of the poem is initiated by a complaint to the gods about an unsatisfactory situation. This has been noted as an oriental technique in chapter 4 ('How to start things moving', p. 173). We have also remarked, in the section above on Achilles and Gilgamesh, the motif of a distressed person going off by himself to offer a tearful prayer to a god. The prayer itself has been quoted in chapter 5, p. 273, for the oriental procedure of reminding the god of previous offerings.

Chryses calls upon Apollo to shoot his arrows at the Danaans, and he does so. They are described as literal arrows that rattle in his quiver and zing from his silver bow, but what the animals and the men die of is plague (61). This directly reflects Semitic imagery. An Ugaritic text refers to the arrows of Resheph, which Baal is apparently asked to stop (*KTU* 1. 82. 3, de Moor, 176), we have seen (p. 55) that Resheph was identified with Apollo in Cyprus. In the Old Testament, too, God appears as an archer whose arrows can represent afflictions such as famine and pestilence (Deut. 32. 23 f., Ezek. 5. 16 f.). In other places they represent lightning, or his destructive force in general (Deut. 32. 42,

Ps. 7. 12 f., 18. 14, 77. 17, 144. 6, Job 6. 4, Lam. 2. 4, 3. 12 f., Hab. 3. 9, 11, Zech. 9. 14). His bow is visible in the clouds on a rainy day (Gen. 9. 11); he set it there as a token that he would not again destroy mankind with a flood. Some passages describe him bending his bow or setting his arrow to it, like Apollo (Ps. 7. 12, Lam. 2. 4, 3. 12, Hab. 3. 9).

The whole sequence of Chryses' appeal which Apollo 'heard', the god's angry descent from Olympus 'like the night', and his discharge of his arrows, has a remarkable parallel in Ps. 18. 7(6)-15(14), supposedly sung by David following his deliverance from the hand of Saul:

In my distress I called upon Yahweh, and to my god I cried for help.
He heard my voice from his temple,
and my cry to him entered his ears.
And the earth heaved and shook,
and the mountains' foundations trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.
He bowed the heavens and came down ...
He made darkness his concealment all round him ...
And he sent forth his arrows, and scattered them,
and multiplied his lightnings, and threw them into confusion.

1. 57-67. Achilles' speech. The sequence 'when they were all assembled, so-and-so stood up and addressed them' is closely paralleled in Babylonian epic, as noted on p. 194. Achilles' proposal to consult 'a seer or a priest or a dream-interpreter' also corresponds to normal Near Eastern practice in times of trouble (pp. 47 f.).

1. 71. Calchas is introduced as the best of augurs, who knew past, present, and future, and who through his power of prophecy *νήεσσ' ἡγήσατο* 'Ἀχαιῶν ἴλιον εἶσω', 'led the way for the Achaeans ships to Ilios'. An analogous expression was used of the Babylonian seer, who was said to 'go in front of the army': *ARM* 2 no. 22. 23, 'in front of my lord's army will go Ilushu-našir the seer, my lord's servant'.

1. 101-8. Agamemnon, angry-faced, complains to Calchas, 'you have never yet told me anything good; you always like prophesying evil'. Similarly in a Hittite account of the siege of Urshu, a city in north Syria, when the Hittite battering-ram broke, 'the king became furious; his face was inauspicious':³⁰ "They keep bringing me bad tidings! May the Weather-god drown you all in a flood!" (*KBo* i. 11 recto 13' f. = *CTH* 7; H. G. Güterbock, *ZA* 44, 1938, 116. 13 f.; the text is in Akkadian). The motif also occurs in the Old Testament, and here with a prophet as

³⁰ Güterbock emends the unintelligible word on the tablet to *lā banātum*, literally 'not good', a phrase sometimes used of omens. Agamemnon, correspondingly, voices his outburst *καὶ ὀσόμενος*, 'boding ill'.

the object of the king's anger. Some four hundred prophets have encouraged Ahab in his intention to invade Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat asks if there is not yet another prophet who might be consulted. Ahab replies, 'There is still one man to consult Yahweh with, but I abhor him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, only evil—Mikayhu the son of Yimlah' (1 Ki. 22. 8 = 2 Chr. 18. 7, compared by Bogan, 4).

1. 121–303. Increasingly hostile dialogue between Achilles and Agamemnon. This dramatic device for explaining the background of a dispute has precedents in the Assyrian Adad-nerari and Tukulti-Ninurta epics, in each of which the Assyrian and the Kassite king exchange aggressive (written) messages, and this leads to war. It is worth quoting P. Machinist, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38, 1976, 456 f., on set speeches in the Tukulti-Ninurta epic:

The latter, in particular, give the Epic its distinctive flavor ... they are alike in that their language is regularly laconic and sharply directed toward exposing and heightening the emotions of the participants. One may note, for example, how provocative are the messages sent from one king to the other ... In this way, the speeches advance the tension between the two sides until the only resolution can be the great battle in column V.

The same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the speeches exchanged between Achilles and Agamemnon.

1. 188–222. Agamemnon has just threatened to come in person to Achilles' quarters to seize Briseis; he will in fact send his two heralds for the purpose (320). Achilles thinks about killing Agamemnon on the spot, and is already drawing his sword, when Athena comes down from heaven at Hera's instigation, grabs him by the hair, and restrains him with a reproving speech. This has aptly been compared (Gordon [1955], 64 f.; Considine, 109) with a scene in the Baal epic, *KTU* 1. 2 i. Yammu sends his envoys (probably two in number) to the gods' assembly to demand the surrender of Baal. El, the gods' president, is ready to give him up, but Baal himself grows angry and takes up a club in each hand with which to smite the envoys. He is immediately restrained by two goddesses, 'Anat and 'Attart, who take him by the arms and reprove him. Two goddesses here, and two in the case of Achilles, except that they do not both appear together (that would go too much against the conventions of Greek epic), but one sends the other. There is a further correspondence between the two envoys of Yammu who come to apprehend Baal and the two heralds of Agamemnon who will come to take Briseis. Was there an earlier version of the *Iliad* in which Achilles' impulse to violence was shown not in the debate, against Agamemnon, but later, against the heralds? As it is, we have a nicer version: the heralds

approach him with trepidation (327, 331), but he reassures them that he does not hold them responsible but their master.

The sending of heralds or messengers in pairs (cf. 9. 170) is characteristic of the Near East (Gordon [1952], 94; T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, 2nd ed., New York 1961, 157 n.). Cf. *KTU* 1. 3 iii 32/36, 4 vii 53, 5 i 11, vi 3, 14. vi 38; Gen. 19. 1, 2 Ki. 5. 23.

1. 234–7. Achilles swears by the sceptre he is holding: '(as surely as) it will never (again) grow leaves and branches, or sprout anew, now that it has left the place in the mountains where it was cut, for the bronze has stripped it of its leaves and bark,' ... so surely will the Achaeans feel the want of himself. Similarly in a Hittite ritual: 'He goes forth and before the gate cuts off a stick with an axe, and says "Even as I cut this stick and it does not reattach itself, may this house likewise cut evil bloodshed and may it not come back!"' (*KUB* vii. 41 verso 24–7 and duplicates [*CTH* 446], compared by Puhvel, 27). And in an Akkadian prayer to Nusku following a dream: 'Just as this reed has been pulled up and will not return to its ground, and this fringe has been cut off my garment and, being cut, will not return to my garment, so may the evil of this dream ... not overtake me: it is not mine' (Oppenheim [1956], 340; Seux, 373; Foster, 638).

1. 255 f. 'Verily, Priam and Priam's sons would rejoice, I and the rest of the Trojans be greatly delighted, I if they heard that you two were quarrelling so.' Apart from the Semitic-type parallelism of the first two lines, it may be noted that this manner of underlining a misfortune by imagining the joy of one's enemies (and their sons) is analogous to *KTU* 1. 6 i 39–41:

Now Athirat and her sons will rejoice,
Elat and the company of her kinsfolk,
for victorious Baal is dead.

1. 362–5. In response to Achilles' prayer, his divine mother comes and enquires, 'My child, why do you weep? What grief has got to your heart?' Similarly in the Ugaritic Keret epic: after losing his seventh wife, the hero goes to his bedroom and weeps over his tale of woe until he falls asleep. His divine father El comes to him in a dream and asks, 'What is it with Keret, that he weeps, the gracious one, El's lad, that he sheds tears?' (*KTU* 1. 14 i 38–41).

Achilles answers with a deep groan, 'You know; why must I tell you all this when you know it?' (cf. *Od.* 4. 465, 24. 478). In a number of bilingual Sumero-Akkadian incantations of the so-called *Šurpu* series it is related that Marduk has seen a man overcome by evil, and he asks Ea what the cause is, and how the man can find relief. Ea answers, 'My son,

what do you not know? What could I add for you? ... What I know, you know' (E. Reiner, *Šurpu. A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations*, Graz 1958, 30, 37; texts first compared by Fries, 375 f.). There is also a possible parallel at *KTU* 1. 1 v 7 f. = 20 f. (Caquot-Szzyr, 312–14), where the sense may be 'weeping he replied: "You know, you certainly know"'; but the text is too fragmentary for alternative interpretations to be ruled out.

1. 393–412. Achilles entreats his mother to intercede with Zeus. It is very common in Akkadian prayers for a sufferer to beg a god to intercede with another, higher one. See Seux, 311, 318, 319, 325, 331, 333, 338 (Foster, 582), 339, 440 (Foster, 589), 501, 528; Foster, 499.

In suggesting to Thetis how she can do this, Achilles refers to an occasion when several of the gods attempted to tie Zeus up. According to the mythological scholium, which may be a secondary concoction, the story was that after becoming king in heaven Zeus behaved arrogantly Poseidon, Hera, Apollo, and Athena intended to tie him up and subdue him. Thetis learned of the plot from her prophetic father Nereus. She hastened to Zeus, taking with her the hundred-armed marine deity Aegaeon, a son of Poseidon, to intimidate the insurgents. She denounced the plotters to Zeus. He suspended Hera in fetters (cf. *Il.* 15. 18 ff), and imposed upon Poseidon and Apollo their servitude with Laomedon. Walter Burkert ([1983], 54 f.; [1992], 105 f.) has compared this tale of a revolt against Zeus with the initial scene in *Atrahasis*. The gods, weary of having to do all the hard work, rebel, burn their tools, surround Enlil's house, and threaten to capture him. Enlil sends for Anu, the sky-god, and Enki, the god of the Apsu; these three are the great rulers of the universe. It is Enki who relieves the situation by proposing the creation of mankind to take over the gods' burden. His role can thus be seen as vaguely analogous to that of the sea-god Aegaeon. But as Burkert concedes, the agreement between the two myths is not very exact. It may also be noted, however, that in the fragmentary Ugaritic text cited above, *KTU* 1. 1 v, the line-ends immediately following 'certainly know' seem to read 'they (or you, dual or plural) will tie up the bull El ... will bind ... between stones'. Cf. Mullen, 101–6.

Of the deity who assisted Zeus in his hour of peril we read (403 f.) that the gods call him Briareos but men call him Aegaeon. This is one of several places where the gods are said to have a different name for something or someone from the name used by mankind; cf. 2. 813 f., 14 290 f., 20. 74, *Od.* 10. 305, 12 61, and passages from later literature collected in my note (West [1966]) on Hes. *Th.* 831. When I wrote that note I was not aware that parallels exist in Hittite and proto-Hattic ritual texts (E. Laroche, *JCS* 1, 1947, 187; J. Friedrich in *Sprachgeschichte und*

Wortbedeutung, Festschr. A. Debrunner, Bern 1954, 135–9). For example, *KUB* viii. 41 ii 1 (*CTH* 733): 'When he speaks prayers to his (the god's) wife, the singer [says]: "Among mankind) you (are) Iuhatanuitis, among the gods [you] (are) the fountain mother, the Queen"', and so on.

1. 425. Thetis tells Achilles that it will be twelve days before Zeus returns to Olympus from the land of the Aethiopes (cf. 493). For this as a typical period see p. 176.

1. 450–7. The priest, having got what he wanted, prays to his god to lift the plague from the Achaeans. So in *Exod.* 8. 12, 30, 10. 18, Moses prays to Yahweh to lift the plagues of frogs, flies, and locusts affecting Egypt. Similarly in 1 Kings 13. 4–6, Jeroboam opposes the unnamed prophet, and finds his arm paralysed; he has to beg the prophet to pray to his god to deliver him from this affliction, and the prophet does so.

1. 472–4. The Achaeans sing appeasing prayers all day till sunset. In a penitential prayer to Ishtar which comes from a Neo-Assyrian tablet but is much older in origin, a priest instructs some women, 'prostrate yourselves before her ... bow down before her; [from the rising] of the sun to the setting of the sun [...] ... pray to her constantly' (W. G. Lambert, *AfO* 19, 1959/60, 54. 216–19; Seux, 198 f.; Foster, 518).

1. 493–611: The first Olympian scene

1. 493–530. Thetis' supplication. The motif of a goddess going and supplicating the chief god on behalf of her protégé, clasping him about the knees, can be found more than a thousand years before the *Iliad* in the Sumerian *Lament for Ur*. Ningal pleaded in vain for her city:

Next in the assembly ...

I verily clasped(?) legs, laid hold of arms,

truly I shed my tears before An,

truly I made supplication, I myself before Enlil:

'May my city not be ravaged!' ...

But An never bent towards those words.

(Lines 152–60; Jacobsen, 457.)

At Thetis' first speech Zeus remains silent. For the motif that a speech elicits no answer cf. pp. 197 f. In the Ugaritic Aqhat epic 'Anat, having been rebuffed by Aqhat, goes and supplicates El, prostrating herself before him, not on behalf of Aqhat but eager to punish him. At first—like Zeus—El does not accede to her request, but after she has pressed it more insistently (actually threatening him with violence, unlike Thetis) he agrees to it (*KTU* 1. 17 vi 46–18 i 19; compared by Dirlmeier, 26). There is a further parallel for this in *Gilg.* VI iii 23 ff., where Anu

first refuses and then agrees to Ishtar's request for the Bull of Heaven (see below on S. 355–430).

Zeus confirms his promise to Thetis with an official nod, emphasizing that whatever he nods to is final and irrevocable. The idea that a god's decision is irrevocable is a commonplace of Mesopotamian literature. Marduk, for instance, declares (*En. el.* II 161 f., cf. VII 151 f.): 'Whatever I create shall never be altered; the word of my lips shall not turn back, not be changed.' Cf. *Lament for Ur*, Jacobsen, 458; Hammurabi's Laws, xlix 55, li 88; *Tuk.-Nin.* ii A 17, 37, iii A 33, with P. Machinist's notes, pp. 232, 408; Shamash Hymn 64, 199, Seux, 272, 274, 289, 351, 458 (= Foster, 562, 564, 602, 557, 585); *CPLM* no. 1 recto 22 (= Foster, 716), 32 verso 19, Tallqvist (1938), 188, 193, 196, 206 f., 212 ff. Similarly in the Old Testament: 'I will not profane my covenant, and what went forth from my lips I will not alter' (Ps. 89. 35[34]); 'he does not put aside his words' (Isa. 31. 2); 'In myself I have sworn; there has gone forth from my mouth justice, a word that will not turn back' (Isa. 45. 23), cf. Num. 23. 19 (cited by Bogan, 379). Likewise irrevocable was the king's word once sealed with his ring (Esther 8. 8).

At Zeus' nod, great Olympus shakes (528–30). This striking detail, which was much admired in antiquity, stands almost alone in classical literature. (It is repeated in the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus*, 13–15.) It seems to reflect the Mesopotamian idea that when the god utters his decisive word, the heaven and/or the earth quakes.

You are the honoured one. When your word is spoken heavenward, the heavens rumble.

You are Enlil. When your word is spoken earthward, the earth shakes.

(M. E. Cohen, *The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia*, Potomac 1988, i. 292. 19 f. = 312. 29 f. (Sumerian).) 'At your word, that like a doubled thread no one can break, the whole heaven quakes' (hymn to Inanna, Falkenstein–von Soden, 75). In the case of Baal, as storm-god, it is natural enough that the earth quakes when he utters his voice (*KTU* 1. 4 vii 31).

1. 533–5. The gods all stand up when Zeus comes in; none of them dares to remain seated. In the Amarna version of *Nergal and Ereshkigal* Namtar, Ereshkigal's vizier, goes up to heaven, and all but one of the gods stand up as a mark of respect (compared by C. Fries, *Klio* 4, 1904, 249; Walcot, 8 f.). In a Hittite fragment attributed to the *Song of Ullikummi* (III F i 6 f.) all the gods stand up before Ea (Güterbock, *JCS* 6, 1952, 25; A. Lesky, *Saeculum* 6, 1955, 49 = Heitsch, 597). In the first millennium bowing or prostrating is emphasized rather than standing; this is what we find in the later version of *Nergal and Ereshkigal*, and so

In Pn. 29. 2, where the 'sons of the gods' are bidden to 'bow down before Yahweh in (your?) holy splendour'. In the Song of Moses, Deut. 32. 43, the Septuagint has the following verse, which has fallen out of the Hebrew text through homoeoteleuton: 'Be glad, you heavens, with him, and let all the sons of God do him homage' (καὶ προσκυνήσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ). Standing up, however, continues to be documented in other kinds of context (Job 29. 8, Isa. 14. 9).

Another passage where the gods leap to their feet as a deity enters is *Hymn. Ap.* 1–13. Here it is Apollo who enters, wielding his bow, and they leap up in alarm rather than in mere respect. His mother Leto disarms him and hangs the bow up; his father welcomes him with a cup of nectar. This is strikingly paralleled in *An-gim*, a Sumerian hymn in praise of Ninurta. As Ninurta drives furiously towards Enlil's city of Nippur, raging like a thunderstorm, his chariot draped with defeated monsters, Enlil's page comes out and begs him not to strike terror into the hearts of his father and the gods assembled in the council chamber, but to accept honour and recognition for his mighty deeds. Ninurta lays aside his whip and goad, leans his club against them, and enters Enlil's mansion with his booty. The gods, deeply impressed, bow down before him, his mother Ninlil soothes him with praise, and his chariot and fighting equipment are received into Enlil's temple. *An-gim* dates from the early second millennium, if not the late third, but was still being copied, with interlinear Akkadian translation, by Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian scribes.³¹

1. 577–89. Hephaestus reminds Hera that it is prudent to yield to Zeus when he is angry; he is much the strongest, and difficult to withstand. Similarly it is said of Marduk:

He glares, and does not turn his neck aside;
when he is angry, no god can face his fury.

(*En. el.* VII 153 f.) Cf. Ebeling (1953), 95. 14 (Seux, 290, Foster, 602), W. G. Lambert, *JCS* 21, 1967, 129. 26 f. (Foster, 292). So too of Erra (*Erra V* 19), 'on the day of your wrath where is he that can face you?' And of Yahweh: 'Who can stand before thee from the time of thy anger?' (Ps. 76. 8(7), cf. 89. 8(7), Nah. 1. 6).

1. 590–4. Hephaestus recalls how Zeus once seized him by the foot and threw him out of heaven. Similar episodes are mentioned at 14. 257 f., 15. 23, and 19. 126–31. See below on the last of these passages.

1. 597–602. For the theme of the gods' merry feasting cf. p. 179.

³¹ J. S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur: an-gim dím-ma* (Analecta Orientalia, 52), Rome 1978; Boué–Kramer, 377–89. The parallel with the Homeric Hymn has been noted by R. Mondé in L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth*, Baltimore 1990, 194 n. 43; Pengelase, 99.

1. 605–11. For the idea that the gods have houses and retire there for the night (cf. also at 24. 677 f.) see p. 112. Their houses are built by their smith, Hephaestus, just as in Ugaritic epic, when a house is to be built for Yammu or Baal, it is the divine smith Kothar who is called upon to build it (*KTU* 1. 2 iii, 3 v, 4 v–vii; Gordon [1955], 60).

2. 1–4. 544: *Battle joined*

2. 1–41. Agamemnon's dream. Various aspects of this episode that reflect Near Eastern poetic traditions have been noted, with the relevant parallels, in chapter 4 (pp. 185–90). They are:

- (i) the sending of a false dream to a king before a battle, to mislead him into thinking he will be victorious;
- (ii) the motif that the king's dream enables him to overcome the army's reluctance to fight;
- (iii) details of the technique by which a dream is described (the dream-figure as spokesman for the god who sends it; it assumes the likeness of a person known to the dreamer; it comes and stands over his head; it delivers a monologue; it says who sent it; it imparts information, the dreamer wakes with a start, his mind full of the dream);
- (iv) the use of the typical messenger-sending sequence.

A dream is not the only means that a god may use in order to deceive a king into undertaking a fatal battle. In 1 Kings 22. 19–22 (according to the vision of Mikayhu), Yahweh had sent one of his subordinates to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all Ahab's prophets, to entice him to attack Ramoth-gilead, where he was to be killed. This passage was adduced by Krenkel, 18.

2. 101–8. The history of the Pelopids' sceptre is related at length. On the Near Eastern background of this god-given emblem of authority see pp. 134 f.

2. 109–41. The king addresses his troops. For this motif, and for the paradoxical 'testing' of the army with a proposal to abandon the war and go home, see pp. 207 f.

2. 308–29. The portent at Aulis. The number of the birds that the snake devours was interpreted by Calchas as a measure of the time (in years) that was to elapse before Troy was taken. A similar principle is applied by Joseph when he interprets dreams: a vine with three branches means three days; three cake baskets likewise; seven fat or thin cows, or seven healthy or blighted ears of corn, mean seven years (Gen. 40, 12, 18, 41. 26 f.; Krenkel, 19).

The sudden transformation of the snake into a stone (319) is faintly reminiscent of Moses' rod which turns into a snake and then back into a rod (Exod. 4. 2–4).

2. 411–18. Agamemnon prays to Zeus that the sun will not set before he has sacked Troy and killed Hector. This is a somewhat back-to-front way of saying 'may we achieve these things before sunset today'. It has been compared with the biblical account of Israel's defeat of the Amorites, when Joshua spoke to Yahweh and called for the sun and moon to stand still, and they did stand still, for about a whole day, until the battle was won (Josh. 10. 12–14; Krenkel, 19). There is also the occasion when Yahweh temporarily reverses the sun's motion at Isaiah's request in order to impress Hezekiah (2 Ki. 20. 8–11). The idea of a god accelerating or delaying the sun for the sake of mortals is not unknown to Homeric poetry, cf. 18. 239–42, *Od.* 23. 241–6.

2. 437–44. Nestor proposes to Agamemnon that heralds be sent to summon the army; Agamemnon gives the order to the heralds, and they go to carry it out. The general technique of structuring the poetic narrative by means of proposals before actions, and the use of messengers for transmitting instructions, here produces a pattern which may be expressed as 'A proposes to B that he send C, B does so'. There is another example at 4. 64–74. But it is a pattern developed long before in Babylonian epic. In *Atr.* I 111 ff. Anu says to Enlil, 'Let Nusku go out to discover what the gods surrounding your house have to say'. Enlil then speaks to Nusku and tells him to do this, and Nusku does it. Cf. also *ibid.* I 376 ff.

2. 455–83. Of the similes accumulated in this passage, at least three have affinities with similes in Semitic poetry: the flies round the milk-pails (469, cf. p. 249); Agamemnon likened to various gods (478 f., cf. p. 243); Agamemnon likened to a bull (480, cf. *ibid.*).

2. 484 ff. Catalogue of the fighting men: see p. 208.

2. 781–3. On Zeus' lashing of Typhoeus among the Arimoi see pp. 301 f.

2. 827. Pandarus' bow was given to him by Apollo himself. There are other persons in Greek mythology who possess bows given to them by a god: Philoctetes had his from Heracles, and Orestes, according to Stesichorus, received one from Apollo to defend himself against the Furies. For oriental parallels see below, pp. 485 f.

3. 193–4. Odysseus is shorter than Agamemnon, but broader in the chest and shoulders. This is one of a number of passages where a warrior is described as being relatively short, yet the equal or superior of others in some other respect: cf. 2. 528–30, 3. 168–70, 210–24, 5. 801; Archil.

114. In the Old Babylonian (Gilgamesh epic, when Enkidu first comes to Uruk, people comment (Pennsylvania fr., v 7 f.):

'Compared with Gilgamesh he is similar in form;
short of stature, (but) strong in the bone!'

On the other hand, 193 and 210 present the picture of the kingly man (Agamemnon, Menelaus) who is taller by a head (cf. 2. 480-3, *contra* 1. 168). Here the parallel is with Saul, who 'stood amid the people, and he was taller than all the people from his shoulders upwards'; Samuel pointed him out as the man chosen by Yahweh, and he was acclaimed as king (1 Sam. 10. 23 f.; Bogan, 26).

3. 276-301. The treaty oath and ritual. For the appeal to Zeus, the Sun, Rivers, and Earth to witness the treaty oath, and the ritual described in 292-301, see pp. 20-2.

The Sun-god is addressed as 'thou that overseest all things' (277 ὅς πᾶν ἐφορᾷ, also *Od.* 12. 323). The Babylonian Shamash has the same title, *bār kal mimma šumšu* 'surveyor of everything whatever' (*OECT* 6. 82). Of Marduk it is said that 'like Shamash he surveys the land' (Ebeling [1931], 25. 12); cf. *Erra* I 116, where Erra claims 'like Shamash I survey the circle of everything'. In both Akkadian and Greek (and Latin) we find the expression 'show (something) to the sun', meaning to expose it in the open: *Gilg.* VIII iv 1'; Hes. *Op.* 612 with West (1978), 312.

The last clause in the curse on violators of the oath, 'and may their wives be taken by others' (301), has a parallel in the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (above, p. 22), and another in Jeremiah 8. 10, where Yahweh says of those who have rejected his word, 'Therefore I will give their wives to others, (and) their fields to new owners' (compared by Bogan, 30).

4. 1-85. So that the action can move forward, the poet has to contrive a breaking of the truce that obtains between the Achaeans and the Trojans. He returns to the gods' feasting on Olympus. Zeus provokes Hera by his suggestion of leaving things as they are and making an end of the war. After she remonstrates, he gives her permission to do as she wishes (37); for this motif see p. 179 (n. 33).

Athena is sent down to earth to engineer the breach of the truce. She descends in the likeness of a meteor, which is observed by the Achaeans and Trojans on the ground and taken to be some sort of omen (75-85). It has been noted (p. 49) that meteors were recognized as omens by the Babylonians. For the idea that a deity might actually descend in this form—rather less aptly used at *Hymn. Ap.* 441 f.—we may compare the tradition attested in late antiquity for Aphaka in Syria, that on a certain

day of the year the goddess Ourania (Aphrodite/Astarte) descended as a fiery star from the top of Mt. Lebanon into the river Adonis (Sozomenos, *Hist. Eccl.* 2. 5. 5; Robertson Smith, 175 n. 1).

The theme of the broken treaty is important in the Assyrian Adad-nerari and Tukulti-Ninurta epics.

4. 403-10. In response to Agamemnon's taunt that Diomedes is showing less fighting spirit than his father Tydeus used to do, Sthenelus replies on Diomedes' behalf, pointing out that they, as members of the Argonauts, had succeeded in taking Thebes, where their fathers had failed. Again the Adad-nerari epic may be cited. Adad-nerari wishes it to be known that whereas his father, Arik-den-ili, had failed to punish the misdeeds of the Kassite aggressor, he himself was successful (fr. C i, ed. Weidner, *AJO* 20, 1963, 113-15).

Diomedes reproves Sthenelus, saying, 'sit silent, and fall in with what I (am about to) say' (412). Cf. *Erra* I 106, 'Ishum, be silent, and hearken to my speech'; V 5, 18.

4. 439-45. The armies are spurred to battle by Ares, Athena, Deimos, Phobos, and Eris. For the gods in this role cf. pp. 209 f.

Phobos and Deimos are the personifications of two kinds of fear, the one that puts you to flight and the one that roots you to the spot. They appear as a pair again at 11. 37, 15. 119, Hes. *Th.* 934, *Sc.* 195. In the third *Iliad* passage they are represented as attendants of Ares who yoke his chariot (which is why, when in 1877 the planet Mars was discovered to have two small satellites, they were given these names). In the great Hittite hymn to Istanu a very similar pair of personifications, Fear and Terror, are described as going beside the Sun (*CTH* 372 i 59-61; Lebrun, 96; *TUAT* ii. 797; J. Puhvel, *AJP* 98, 1977, 396-9 = *Analecta Indo-europaea*, Innsbruck 1981, 379-81).

Eris, the personification of Strife, is called Ares' sister and companion. She is small at first, but subsequently she grows sky-high (443):

οὐρανῶι ἐστήριξε κάρη καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ βαίνει.

she sets her head in heaven while walking on the earth.

It was an ancient motif in Mesopotamian hymns that the extent of a deity's power in heaven and earth was expressed in terms of his or her physical size. A Sumerian hymn to Inanna makes the goddess say: 'When I raise my hand, it encompasses (lit. completes) the heaven ... When I lift my foot, it encompasses the earth.'³² In another she declares:

³² P. Haupt (as ch. 5, n. 149), 127 f. (+ an unpublished Neo-Babylonian duplicate), kindly translated for me by Dr. J. A. Black. These and the following comparisons are repeated from *Ethics and Rhetoric, Classical Essays for Donald Russell*, Oxford 1995, 338 f.

'Heaven placed a crown on my head, Earth put a sandal on my foot.'³³ Similarly in an Akkadian hymn to the healing goddess Gula, dating from the late second or early first millennium, she says of her consort Ninurta, 'He wears the heavens on his head, like a tiara, I He is shod with the earth, as with [san]dals.'³⁴ The Mesopotamian commonplace no doubt lies behind Isa. 66. 1, where Yahweh declares 'The heavens are my throne, and the earth my footstool.'

The idea of a divine being stretching all the way from earth to heaven also appears in Ugaritic poetry. Here it is applied to a god's gaping mouth, which his victim cannot avoid: 'one lip to the earth, one lip to the heavens' (*KTU* 1. 5 ii 2, 23. 61 f.). But in some ways the nearest parallel to Homer's verse is to be found in Ps. 73. 9, where it is said of the arrogant:

They have set their mouth in the heavens,
and their tongue walks upon the earth.

The structure here is remarkably close to Homer's; even the variation of tenses matches.³⁵ As in Homer, the subject is not a deity of cult but the graphic symbol of a human excess. The psalm is of post-exilic date, but no one will suppose the verse in question to derive from Homer rather than from older Hebrew models.

4. 457-62. For the initial kill marking the transition from general to particular description of the fighting, see p. 211.

5. 1-6. 118: *The aristeia of Diomedes*

5. 9 f. 'There was among the Trojans one Dares, a wealthy and blameless man, a priest of Hephaestus; and he had two sons, Phegeus and Idaios.' This manner of beginning a story is closely paralleled in the Old Testament, as in Job 1. 1: 'A man there was in the land of 'Uz, Job his name, and that man was sound and upright and God-fearing, one who turned away from evil; and there were born to him seven sons and three daughters.' Or 1 Sam. 1. 1: 'There was a certain man from Ramatayim-sopim, from the uplands of Ephraim, his name Elqanah the son of Yeroham ... He had two wives, the name of the one Hannah, the name of the other Peninnah.' (Passages compared by Bogan, 37.)

³³ H. Zimmern, *Sumerische Kultlieder aus altbabylonischer Zeit* ii, Leipzig 1913, no. 199 in 17 f.; W. H. P. Römer in *TUAT* ii 647. The translation above has again been supplied by Dr. Black.

³⁴ W. G. Lambert, *Or. N.S.* 36, 1967, 124 (Foster, 497), lines 133 f.

³⁵ The Hebrew is: שֵׁשׁ כְּסָמִים פִּיהֶם וּלְשׁוֹנָם תִּהְלֵךְ בְּאָרְצָא

5. 127 f. Athena removes the obscurity from Diomedes' eyes so that he will be able to recognize gods. Similarly in Numbers 22. 31, 'Yahweh opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw Yahweh's Messenger standing on the road.' Until then Balaam's donkey had been able to see the angel, but Balaam himself had not. Cf. also 2 Ki. 6. 17 and Ps. 119. 18 (Bogan, 37; Krenkel, 22).

5. 177, 183. Diomedes is so dominant on the battlefield that the Trojans begin to consider the possibility that it is some god. The best oriental parallels seem to be from the Egyptian poem on the Battle of Qadesh (Lichtheim, ii. 67 and 70):

I (Ramesses II) slaughtered among them, they were slain on the spot,
One called out to the other saying:
'No man is he who is among us,
It is Seth great-of-strength, Baal in person;
Not deeds of man are these his doings.'

They called out to one another:
'Beware, take care, don't approach him,
Sakhmet the Great is she who is with him,
She's with him on his horses, her hand is with him.'

5. 185. Diomedes μᾶλιστα, he is raging mad: cf. p. 213.

5. 241-75. Sthenelus sees Aeneas and Pandarus attacking, and he and Diomedes discuss them for thirty lines. Then they arrive:

So they were speaking thus to each other,
and soon the other two came up, driving their swift horses.

The technique is very similar in the *Song of Ullikummi* I A iv 41 ff. Teššub's vizier Tašmišu sees the Sun-god approaching, and discusses the matter with Teššub. Then: 'While thus they were speaking, the Sun-god arrived at their [house]'.³⁶

5. 330-54. Diomedes defeats Aphrodite in combat, as he will later defeat Ares, and speaks mockingly to her. It is not often remarked how extraordinary these events are in terms of common Greek sentiment; normally it is quite unthinkable that a mortal could ever overcome a god. Gordon (1955), 57 f., compares the episode in Gen. 32. 24-30, where Jacob wrestles with God (or a god) in human form and prevails over him.

5. 355-430. Aphrodite removes herself to Olympus, falls distraught on the lap of her mother Dione, and complains that Diomedes has wounded her. Dione comforts her and tends the wound. Then her father Zeus speaks to her, advising her that war is not her province and that she had better stick to love. This is closely analogous to a passage in the

Gilgamesh epic, VI iii 11 ff. Gilgamesh has enraged Ishtar by rejecting her offer of love and reminding her of how her previous lovers have come to bad ends.

When Ishtar [heard] this,
Ishtar was furious, and [went up] to heaven.
Ishtar went and wept before Anu her father,
before Antu her mother her tears flowed.

She tells Anu how Gilgamesh has insulted her. Anu is not especially sympathetic, and asks why she did not deal with the offender herself. She asks him to let her have the Bull of Heaven to strike Gilgamesh down. Anu at first refuses, but is then persuaded.

What is striking about the parallel with the *Iliad*³⁶ is the correspondence between the deities. Aphrodite is the equivalent of Ishtar, the love-goddess. Her father Zeus corresponds to Ishtar's father Anu, the sky-god. Her mother Dione—mentioned only here in Homer—is formed from Zeus' name with a feminine suffix, as it were 'Mrs Zeus'; and Antu is similarly the feminine counterpart of Anu, 'Mrs Sky'. In both stories the love-goddess is worsted and mocked by a mortal, retreats to heaven in a distressed state, complains to her parents, and receives an unsympathetic response from her father. This is an important addition to the series of parallels noted earlier between the *Iliad* and the Gilgamesh epic.

There is, however, also an Ugaritic parallel (*KTU* 1. 17 vi–18 i; Considine, 88–91). The goddess 'Anat covets Aqhat's bow, and offers him immortality in exchange for it; but he refuses, not believing that her offer is sincere, and scorning her need of a bow (17 vi 39–41):

'A bow [is the weapon of] warriors:
will womankind now hunt [with it]?'

The mockery recalls that which Aphrodite receives from Diomedes (348–51) and Zeus (428–30). 'Anat betakes herself to her father, El, denounces Aqhat, and asks permission to punish him. El refuses at first but then lets her have her way.

5. 385–7. Dione refers to an occasion when the sons of Aloeus imprisoned Ares in a bronze jar (κέραμος). Some ancient scholars explained this with reference to a Cypriot use of κέραμος for 'prison'. In colloquial English we speak of being 'in jug'; but the Cypriot usage must imply an actual practice of confining wrongdoers in a large pithos.

³⁶ First noticed by Fries, 394, but not fully worked out by him; Gresseth, 14 n. 24; Burkert, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 51, 1982, 356–8; id. (1992), 96–9.

There is evidence for such a practice as a punishment for insubordinate slaves in the Hittite law code, II ii 14 f.: 'If a slave rebels against his master, he goes to the Jar.' J. Harmatta, who adduced this text (*Acta Antiqua* 16, 1968, 57–64), also refers to the bronze jars in the Hittite underworld into which things disappear for ever; cf. above, p. 153.

5. 432–44. Apollo is protecting Aeneas from Diomedes. Although Diomedes knows this, he three times charges against Aeneas, and is pushed away by the god; when he attacks for a fourth time, Apollo gives him a verbal warning, and he withdraws to avoid the god's wrath. There is a parallel episode with Patroclus and Apollo at 16. 702–11. We may refer once again to the story of the diviner Balaam (Num. 22. 21 ff.). He has consented to go to Moab to advise the king, and he is on his way there, riding on a donkey. A Messenger of Yahweh stands to block his way, visible at first only to the donkey. Three times Balaam tries to press forward, and three times the donkey shies back at the sight of the divinity. Finally Yahweh opens Balaam's eyes (as already cited in connection with the opening of Diomedes' eyes by Athena): then he is frightened and says he will go back.

5. 506 f. Ares covers the battle in darkness. For this motif, which recurs several times in the *Iliad*, see pp. 212 f.

5. 720–72. Hera and Athena ride out of heaven. For Hera's chariot and harness of gold and other precious metals (726–31) cf. p. 112 (n. 34). In 745 the chariot is described as 'fiery' (φλόγεα), which recalls the 'chariot of fire and horses of fire' that carried Elijah up to heaven (2 Ki. 2. 11; Gordon [1955], 61).

For the 'gates of heaven', guarded by the Horai (749–51), see pp. 141 f.

For the immense leaps of Hera's steeds (770–2), see p. 113 with n. 37.

5. 784–92. Hera gives a mighty war-shout, one of several occasions in the *Iliad* when a god or goddess does so (cf. 14. 147–52, 15. 321 f., 18. 217 f., 20. 48–53). The motif is Mesopotamian. In the Sumerian poem *Lugal-e* Ninurta, preparing to go out to do battle with the monstrous Azag, gives a great cry which shakes heaven and earth, shatters mountains, and makes the gods flee in terror like sheep (69–71; Jacobsen, 240). Ishtar, as warrior-goddess, 'is more terrifying than a bull: her shout is like its fury' (Agušaya hymn, A iv 14 f.). The fearsome Seven, created by Anu as allies for Erra, urge him to go out to battle, make his weapons resound, and 'make your shout so loud that they tremble both above and below' (*Erra* I 61).

5. 864–7. Ares going up to heaven has the appearance of a lowering sky before a summer storm. We can compare 1. 47, where Apollo comes

down 'like the night', and I. 359, where Thetis ascends from the sea 'like a mist'. This fashion of seeing a divinity in a natural atmospheric phenomenon has a parallel in Isa. 18. 4, where Yahweh says:

Let me calmly look out from my abode
like the shimmering heat against the sunlight,
like the dewy mist at harvest-time.

6. 37–65. Adrestus, falling into Menelaus' hands, pleads for his life. Menelaus is inclined to spare him, until Agamemnon intervenes and persuades him to ignore the plea. The motif has a precedent in the Gilgamesh epic; see p. 216.

When Agamemnon says (57–9), 'let no Trojan escape from death and from our hands, not even the male child that his mother still carries in her womb', his sentiment has Assyrian and Syro-Palestinian parallels; see p. 217.

6. 111 f. Hector calls to the Trojans,

'Proud Trojans and far-famed auxiliaries,
be men, my friends, and bethink yourselves of valour.'

(Cf. 8. 173 f., al.) Similarly I Sam. 4. 9 (Bogan, 162; Krenkel, 22): 'Take courage and be men, Philistines ... Be men, and fight.' The expression 'bethink oneself of valour' has an Old Babylonian parallel, quoted on p. 228.

6. 119–236: *Diomedes and Glaucus. The story of Bellerophon*

6. 122–9. Diomedes asks Glaucus, 'Who are you that comes to fight me?' (So too Achilles to Asteropaeus at 21. 150.) For this question on the battlefield see p. 215.

Diomedes continues, 'If you are a god come down from heaven, I will not fight you ... But if you are a mortal ...'. Similarly Odysseus asks Nausicaa, 'Are you a goddess or a mortal? If you are a goddess ... But if you are a mortal ...' (*Od.* 6. 149 f.). This is now obsolete as a conversational gambit, but it seems to have had a long history, since we find it in two Sumerian poems. In *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld* Enki sends two emissaries to Ereshkigal, and advises them that she will ask them, as indeed she does, 'Who are you to whom I have spoken ...? An you be gods, let me talk with you; an you be humans, let me determine your circumstances for you!' (238–40 = 259–62; Jacobsen, 219, 221). Similarly in the Lugalbanda epic (105–8; Jacobsen, 327 f.), the Storm-bird asks Lugalbanda, 'O (you) who thus have treated my nest, an you be a god, let me talk to you ... an you be a human, let me decree for you (new) status.'

6. 146–9. Human generations come and go like the year's leaves. This poignant piece of popular philosophy, another version of which appears in Mimnermus (2. 1 ff.), was clearly not invented for this context, because it does not fit it; it is an irrelevant answer to Diomedes' question 'Who are you?', and it is dragged in for its own sake. The thought is paralleled in the Old Testament. 'Man's days are like grass (the greenery, herbage); like the blossom of the field, so he blooms. For the wind passes over it, and it is not there' (Ps. 103. 15 f., cf. 90. 5 f. quoted by Brown, 57). 'All flesh is grass ... the grass dries up, the flower withers ... The people is truly grass' (Isa. 40. 6 f., cf. Job 14. 2).³⁷

6. 152–205. The story of Bellerophon. This tale, partly located in Asia Minor, contains a fascinating cluster of oriental details and motifs. It starts with the formula 'There is a city called ..., situated in ..., and in it lived ...', which has been discussed on p. 259.

Proitos' wife Anteia (in later sources called Sthenoboea) falls in love with the handsome young Bellerophon and tries to seduce him. When he rebuffs her, she denounces him to her husband as having sought to make love to her. Proitos then takes measures against Bellerophon. This is a familiar story pattern; I call it the Zuleika theme, Zuleika being (according to rabbinic tradition) the name of Potiphar's wife in the well-known story in Gen. 39, who plays the same role as Anteia. (Compared with the Bellerophon story by Bogan, 56; Krenkel, 23.) There is earlier evidence for the currency of the theme in the Near East. It appears in the Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers, known from a papyrus of c. 1225 BC (*ANET* 23–5; Lichtheim, ii. 203–11; cf. S. T. Hollis in *CANE* iv. 2258 f.). In Greek mythology it is attached not only to Bellerophon but also to Peleus ([Hes.] fr. 208, Apollod. 3. 13. 3, etc.), Hippolytus, and several others (J. A. White, *AJP* 103, 1982, 123 n. 16).

Proitos attempts to dispose of Bellerophon by sending him to his father-in-law Iobates, who lives in Lycia, with a letter, written on a hinged tablet, that contains 'many soul-destroying things'. He is to show it to Iobates, and this is expected to bring about his death. The letter must have recommended Iobates to kill its bearer. The same theme occurs in the saga of David (2 Sam. 11. 14–17; Krenkel, 23). To get rid of Uriah the 'Hittite', whose wife he has made pregnant, David sends him to his field-marshal Joab, who is fighting the Ammonites at Rabbah, with a letter instructing him to station Uriah in the front line and then leave him isolated, so that he gets killed.

³⁷ Even closer to Homer is Ecclus. 14. 18 (I. Rodríguez, *Helmantica* 10, 1959, 383–90): 'As with the leafage flourishing on a dense tree—it drops some, and puts forth others—so with the generation of flesh and blood: one dies, and another is born.' But that is almost certainly influenced by the *Iliad* passage.

There may also be a much earlier oriental example of the motif, in a Sumerian narrative about Sargon of Akkad, dating from the late Old Babylonian period (J. S. Cooper and W. Heimpel, *JAOS* 103, 1983, 77). Sargon is the cupbearer of Ur-Zababa, the king of Kish. He dreams that Inanna will drown Ur-Zababa in a river of blood. On hearing this, the king is afraid. It seems that he is afraid of Sargon (who will in fact displace him), and after one failed attempt to dispose of him he sends him to Uruk with a letter.

In those days, writing on clay certainly existed, but enveloping tablets did not exist.

King Ur-Zababa, for Sargon, creature of the gods,
with writing on clay—a thing which would cause his own death—
he dispatched it to Lugal-zagesi in Uruk.

(Lines 53–6, as translated by B. Alster, *ZA* 77, 1987, 171.) Line 53 may imply that the letter could not be concealed from the messenger. According to Alster's interpretation of line 55, Sargon was sent with the letter, which contained instructions to kill him, but he found out what was in it and altered the message to make Lugal-zagesi kill someone else instead. The sequel is obscure.

This story of Bellerophon is the only place in Homer where the art of writing is mentioned. The epic tradition had evolved through centuries of illiteracy, and the poets were accustomed to managing all ordinary transactions in the narrative without reference to writing. Where kings in Assyrian epic send each other written messages, in Homer they send oral ones, or speak face to face. But in the case of Bellerophon an oriental story has been taken over in which a written document plays an essential part. Burkert (1983), 52, has pointed out that the phraseology used in 169 unequivocally signifies a hinged wooden tablet of the kind widely used in the Near East (*CAD* L 157–9) and taken over by the Greeks after about 800 BC.

Bellerophon is said to have travelled to Lycia 'under the faultless escort of the gods' (171). The idea of a divine escort who guides someone safely through a dangerous journey is one that occurs elsewhere in Homer (cf. 24. 331–469, *Od.* 9. 142, 10. 141, 12. 72, 21. 196, 201). Gordon (1962), 235, compares Exod. 23. 20/23 and Num. 20. 16, where a Messenger of Yahweh is sent to guide the Israelites out of Egypt and to Canaan. See also below, at 24. 331–469.

The first task that Iobates sets Bellerophon is to kill the Chimaera, 'a composite monster which in two at least of three elements agrees with Late Hittite iconography as attested at Carchemish and Zinjirli' (Burkert [1983], 52; cf. Helck, 212 f.). It is also mentioned at 16. 328, where

again it is located in Lycia—a thoroughly oriental creature that the myth itself actually places in south Anatolia.

The story reaches its happy ending with Iobates recognizing Bellerophon's true worth and giving him his daughter's hand and half his kingdom. For the gift of half a kingdom (cf. 9. 616) Bogan, 57, compared Esther 7. 2, where king Aḥašweroš (Xerxes) asks Esther what her petition is: 'It shall be granted to you ... Up to the half of the kingdom it shall be fulfilled.'

There is, however, a dismal sequel (200–2). Bellerophon afterwards became hated by all the gods (the reason is suppressed), and went wandering alone over the Plain of Aleïon, eating his heart and avoiding the tracks of men. There seems to be a deliberate play between the name of the plain and the verb 'went wandering' (*alâto*), as if it were 'the Plain of Wandering'. There is a striking coincidence here, if coincidence it be, with the story of Cain, who, having killed his brother Abel, was condemned by Yahweh to be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and went to reside in the Land of Nôd, which means Land of Wandering (Gen. 4. 8–16); the name picks up *nād* 'fugitive' in the preceding lines, just as in the Homeric verse *Alēïon* and *alâto* are juxtaposed. The parallel is enhanced if we take account of the version in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*, according to which Bellerophon came to Proitos in the first place to be purified because he had killed his brother (Apollod. 2. 3. 1; I. A. White, *AJP* 103, 1982, 126 f.).

6. 237–8. 565: The Trojans fight back

6. 258–68. Hecuba welcomes Hector in and offers him wine, but Hector declines. It is not an occasion for leisurely refreshment; there are more urgent things to be done. This is the first example of a motif that occurs elsewhere in the *Iliad* and is paralleled in Hittite texts. See p. 203.

6. 281 f. Hector wishes that the earth would open and swallow Paris up. In other places (4. 182, 8. 150, 17. 417) people overcome by shame are represented as wishing to disappear in the same manner. In the *Hymn to Demeter* (16) the earth does gape open for Hades to come out. There is, then, the mythical conception that the earth can suddenly gape open (*χάσκω*, properly of opening one's mouth wide), and the resulting chasm is conceived as leading directly to the underworld. We find exactly the same idea in Num. 16. 30–3 (Bogan, 58 f.): 'the ground under them split open; the earth opened its mouth (*tiptah ʾet-pîhā*) and swallowed them and their house(hold)s and all the men of Qorah and all their property. And they and all they had went down alive to Sheol; and the earth covered them over.' There is also an episode in the Gilgamesh epic (VI iv 7 ff.; cf. below on 9. 533–49) where, at the snorting of the Bull of

Heaven, chasms open up in the earth, swallowing several hundred young men of Uruk, though it is not said explicitly that they fell straight into the underworld.

6. 295. As an offering to Athena Hecuba selects a robe that 'shone like a star'. For this simile, which would not occur to a modern writer see p. 252.

6. 306. The priestess prays to the goddess to break Diomedes' spear. For the idea that deities may break people's weapons during battle see pp. 210 f.

6. 345-8. Helen wishes she had perished on the day she was born, before the present lamentable events could come about. At 22. 481 Andromache wishes she had not been born, and so does Hephaestus at *Od.* 8. 312. These personal reactions to misfortune are paralleled in Semitic poetry. In *Erra* IV 88-92 Angal, the god of the destroyed city of Der, laments

The city governor is speaking to his mother thus:

'On the day your bore me, would that I had been blocked in your womb;

would that our life had ended, and that we had died together,
as you have given me to a city whose wall has been demolished.'

Jeremiah (20. 14-18) curses the day he was born, and the man who brought the news to his father; he wishes he had died in the womb, never emerging from it, and killing his mother. Similarly Job 3. 1 ff., 10. 18 f. (Brown, 311 f.)

6. 357 f. Helen now supposes that Zeus sent an evil fate upon her and her lover in order that they should be a theme of song for men of the future; cf. *Od.* 8. 580. A parallel for this explanation is to be found in the Old Babylonian *Agušaya* hymn. Ishtar asks Ea why he has created *Sāltum* (Strife) to oppose her. He answers (B vii 11-14),

'Therefore *Sāltum* was made, was created,
so that people of the future should learn of us.'

In the Sumerian poem *Inanna and Šukaletuda*, the goddess tracks down the gardener who raped her as she slept in the shade of his trees, and she punishes him (possibly turning him into a frog). But she informs him that his name will not be forgotten: it will survive in sweet songs, sung by minstrels in the royal palace and by herdsmen as they churn the milk (289-92; Bottéro-Kramer, 266).

6. 370-89. Hector goes to his house looking for his wife, but 'he did not find white-armed Andromache at home; she was standing on the city wall with her son and her servant'. Similarly in a Hittite narrative (the

Song of Silver, CTH 364; Laroche, 64; Hoffner, 47 § 4): 'He arrived in Urkish, but he did not find [Kumarbi] in his house; he had gone to roam the lands.' For the pattern by which Hector questions the servants, suggesting possible places where his wife may have gone, and these are then negated one by one, see p. 198.

6. 389. Hector is told how Andromache had gone rushing to the wall 'like a raving woman', *μαινομένην εἰκυῖα*. This is an anticipation of 22. 480, where she hears the communal wailing as Hector is killed and rushes through the house *μαϊνάδι ἴση*. The word used in the latter place suggests not just any woman who happens to be out of her mind, but a lunatic, or someone in an official religious ecstasy. The simile recalls *En. el.* IV 88, where Tiamat, on hearing Marduk's challenge, goes into a frenzy and 'became (like) a *mahhātu*', that is, an ecstatic prophetess. Another Akkadian text, a fragment apparently describing mourning for a king, refers to someone who 'wailed like a *mahhū*', the male equivalent of *mahhātu* (CPLM no. 23 obv. 5').

6. 528. *κητιῆρα στήσασθαι ἐλεύθερον*, 'set up a mixing-bowl of freedom', is an unusual expression. Bogan, 61, long ago compared Ps. 116. 13, 'I will raise the cup of salvation'.

7. 44 f. The seer Helenus receives the gods' debate in his mind. For direct human perception of the divine assembly and its deliberations see pp. 181 f.

7. 67-272. The duel between Hector and Ajax. For the whole structure of this episode see p. 214, and below on 7. 132-60.

7. 81-3. Hector says that if he is victorious, he will strip Ajax of his armour and hang it up in the temple of Apollo. The same practice existed in Palestine. The Philistines stripped the body of Saul and set up his armour in the temple of the Ashtaroth (1 Sam. 31. 9 f.; Bogan, 62).

7. 87-90. Hector anticipates that passing sailors, seeing Achilles' tumulus, will deliver an oral epitaph: "That is the tomb of a man who died long ago, a hero killed by shining Hector." So they will say one day, and my fame will never perish.' Gilgamesh too, before combat, considers the outcome in terms of his own glory and what people will say (OBV Yale fr., iv 13-15):

'If I fall, I hope to establish my name.

"Gilgamesh (people will say) joined battle with Huwawa the powerful."

7. 96-100. Menelaus reproaches the Achaeans for their cowardice. See p. 237.

7. 132-60. Within the narrative of the duel of Hector and Ajax the poet has set a reminiscence by Nestor of a similar story in which he

himself played the hero's part. Here the parallels with David and Goliath are all the more noticeable, as the defeated warrior, Ereuthalion, is characterized as a giant (155 f.), and he wielded a distinctive weapon, an iron club (141), which recalls the massive iron head of Goliath's spear (1 Sam. 17. 7). He came forward in his armour and challenged all the opposing heroes to fight him. The rest were afraid, but Nestor—the youngest of Neleus' twelve sons, as David is the youngest of Jesse's eight—accepted the challenge and, with divine support, killed the man and left him sprawled on the ground. The parallelism was noted by Krenkel, 24 f.; D. Mülder, *Die Ilias und ihre Quellen*, Berlin 1910, 32–49; in most detail, H. Mühlestein, *Antike und Abendland* 17, 1971, 173–7 = his *Homerische Namenstudien*, Frankfurt 1987, 56–60. The event is located at a river Iardanos (135, contradicting 133), which later commentators could not find; this has been suspected of reflecting an original which referred to the Jordan (Heb. *Yarden*).³⁸

7. 451. Poseidon complains that the fame of the Achaean wall will extend over all the earth, as far as the light of day spreads. For this emphasis on the geographical extent of fame we may compare Ps. 111(10) (Bogan, 67), 'As thy name, O God, so thy praise (is) to the ends of the earth'.

8. 2–27. Zeus addresses the assembled gods in menacing tones. His initial demand for attention,

Listen to me, all you gods and all you goddesses,
while I say what the spirit in my breast bids me,

may be compared with *Erra* V 4 f.:

Erra opened his mouth and spoke to all the gods:
'Be quiet, all of you, and attend to my word!'

Zeus goes on to warn the gods not to try to do anything in contravention of his will. Any that he catches giving unauthorized help either to Trojans or to Danaans will be roughed up or perhaps hurled into Tartarus. Yahweh issues a similar threat in Psalm 82 (cf. Mullen, 228–30).

God (Elohim) was standing in the congregation of El;
amid the gods he was holding judgment.
'How long will you give unjust judgments
and show favour to the wicked? ...

I say: you are gods and sons of the Most High, all of you,
yet truly like man you will die, and like one of the chiefs you will fall.'

In 18–27 Zeus challenges his audience to a tug-of-war. We are invited to picture him holding one end of a golden chain with all the other gods dangling from the other end, and the earth and the sea as well; he might then tie his end round a peak of Olympus and leave them all suspended. This extraordinary vision stands quite alone in early Greek literature. It provoked later interpreters to far-reaching allegorical interpretations. But it seems to have its source in a distinctive concept of first millennium Babylonian theology, according to which the supreme god holds all the others on a lead-rope (*serretu*), like a victorious warrior leading his captives, and this lead-rope may be identified as the bond or fastenings (*markasu*) of heaven and earth. In Assurbanipal's acrostic hymn we read how Marduk 'has made firm and grasped in his hand the lead rope of the Igigi and Anunnaki, the bond of heaven and earth' (CPLM no. 2 rev. 8; Foster, 723). Gula is addressed as 'grasper of the bond of the circle of heaven and earth, holder of the great bond of Isharra' (E. Reiner, *JNES* 19, 1960, 31. 4 f. = 24 f.), and Assurnasirpal II uses a similar phrase of Ninurta (Annals, 1 i 2 f.; Grayson [1991], 193; ed. of Nabu, Ebeling [1953], 108. 39). Ishum praises Erra, saying 'Warrior Erra, you hold the lead-rope of heaven' (*Erra* III D 3). Already in *Enūma eliš* (VII 80, 95) Marduk is celebrated as having made firm the gods' knot (*turru*) and as being 'king of the bond of the gods, lord of the *Durmahu*' (= Sumerian *dur-mah*, 'supreme bond'), while in the great Shamash Hymn it is said of the Sun-god, 'you suspend the circle of the lands from the interior of heaven' (22). Cf. CPLM no. 52. 6, 'with Shamash is the lead-rope, in heaven ... f'.

8. 111. Diomedes speaks of his spear 'raging' (μαίvera) in his hands; cf. 16. 75. In Akkadian poetry and prose it is common for a king's weapons to be qualified as *ezzu*, 'raging, angry', as in *Šar tamhāri*, KA 359 obv. 4 of Sargon's. Other instances may be found in the lexica.

8. 131 ff. The Trojans would have been penned in Ilios like lambs, had Zeus not thundered and sent a lightning bolt in front of Diomedes' horses, which turned them to flight. For the sheep simile cf. p. 247. The motif that an impending attack is turned into a rout through the intervention of a divinity who thunders loudly is paralleled in 1 Sam. 7. 10.

8. 162. Hector taunts Diomedes as having been honoured by the Danaans ἔδρη τε κρέας τε, with a privileged seating position and the best cuts of meat (cf. 7. 321; 12. 311). Samuel honours Saul with the name two forms of privilege, a place at the head of the company and a joint of meat that had been specially put aside—albeit not the chine, the

³⁸ Mülder, op. cit., 47 n. 2; Mühlestein, op. cit., 182 = 65. Another river Iardanos is located in Crete (*Od.* 3. 292) and another in Lydia (St. Byz.). The name is easily but perhaps falsely derived from W. Semitic *yrd* 'descend'; it may rather be pre-Semitic.

cut that is most highly regarded in the Greek epic (1 Sam. 9, 22 + Krenkel, 25).

8, 442. For Zeus' golden throne see p. 112 with n. 33.

8, 555-61. The Trojans' camp fires spread out over the plain and compared to the stars: see p. 246.

9. 1-10. 579: The Embassy. The Doloneia

9. 137 f. 'Let him load up his ship plentifully with gold and bronze when we share out the spoils.' It is hard to imagine how the embarkations to the *Iliou Persis* or *Nostoi* could have been described without reference to the loading of Trojan booty onto the ships. There was literary precedent for this in the Tukulti-Ninurta epic (vi B rev. 12' f.), '(With) the abundant wealth of the Kassite king's treasury he filled the boats, (with) affluence for (the god) Aššur', and no doubt in other Assyrian historical epics.

9. 328 f. 'Twelve cities I have sacked with my ships, eleven on foot': see p. 260.

9. 378-87. Achilles rejects Agamemnon's offered gifts, saying that he would not help him even if he were to offer ten or twenty times as much, or all that goes in to Orchomenos or Egyptian Thebes. When King Balaq of Moab sends envoys to the diviner Balaam, offering him great honour if he will come to assist him, Balaam rejects the overtures in similar tones (Num. 22, 18): 'Even if Balaq gives me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the command of Yahweh my god'.

9. 410-16. Achilles has been told by his mother that there are two alternative destinies before him: an early death at Troy with imperishable glory, or a long life at home without glory. At the moment he favours the second, but as the poem proceeds it becomes ever more certain and clear that it is the first that will be realized. It seems possible that the motif is a distant echo of one associated with Gilgamesh. In a Sumerian fragment which S. N. Kramer hesitantly attributed to a poem that he called *The Death of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh has apparently had a dream, and someone interprets it to him as follows (ANET 50 f.):

Enlil, the great mountain, the father of the gods ...

has destined thy fate, Gilgamesh, for kingship, for eternal life he has not destined it. ...

Supremacy over mankind he has granted thee,
unmatched ... he has granted thee,

battle from which none may retreat he has granted thee,

onslaughts unrivalled he has granted thee,

attacks from which none may escape he has granted thee.

Gilgamesh, we may say, was the king who wanted eternal life but could not have it, while on the other hand he did win exceptional fame and glory, which is represented as some sort of compensation. If this was the original source of Achilles' alternative fates, we have only to assume that eternal life (out of the question for the humanized hero of the *Iliad*) has been replaced by long life, and that the dichotomy between this and glory has been dramatized into a choice.

The idea that Gilgamesh is concerned about his fame appears occasionally in the Akkadian epic (OBV Yale fr., iv 13-15; v 3-7; SBV IV vi 17).

9. 447-57. Phoenix relates how he made love to his father's concubine (*pallakis*), and how Amyntor his father at once suspected the truth and cursed him. The story has been compared with that of Reuben, who lay with the concubine (*pilégeš*) of his father Israel (Jacob). Israel heard of it, and subsequently demoted Reuben from his privileges as firstborn (Gen. 35. 22 + 49. 3 f.; Krenkel, 26; Brown, 65-70).

Amyntor's curse was fulfilled by 'Zeus of the earth (Ζεὺς καταχθόνιος) and Persephone', that is, by the powers of the underworld who are hostile to life and who saw to it that Phoenix should never have a son. 'Zeus of the earth' is equivalent to Hades. The title appears also in Hesiod (*Op.* 465), Aeschylus (*Supp.* 156-8, 230 f., *Ag.* 1386), and elsewhere; cf. West (1978), 276. It cannot be an inherited aspect of Zeus' identity, since Zeus (corresponding to Sanskrit *Dyaus*) was originally the personified sky, and a 'Sky of the earth' is nonsense. On the other hand it corresponds to a title of the Mesopotamian lord of the underworld, Nergal, who is sometimes called 'Enlil of the earth' both in Sumerian and Akkadian. Cf. *The Death of Ur-Nammu* 89 (S. N. Kramer, *JCS* 21, 1967, 114/118); *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk* iii. 27 no. 60 obv. 10; Tallqvist (1938), 26.

9. 502-12. This picturesque myth of the personified Prayers and Ate is in the spirit of Semitic poetry. Cf. p. 320 on Hesiod's Dike, and for Ate below at 19. 91-131. The detail that the rejected goddesses go to Zeus and beg him to send harm upon the offender (as Dike does in Hesiod, *Op.* 256-62) may be compared with Ishtar's behaviour on being rejected by Gilgamesh, *Gilg.* VI iii-iv.

9. 533-49. The Calydonian Boar. Artemis, angry at Oineus because he had insulted her by omitting her from his sacrifices, 'started up an evil against' the Calydonians (τοῖσι κακὸν ... ὤρσεν); the expression has been compared with 2 Sam. 12. 11, 'I am making evil arise against you' (*mēqīm 'alēykā rā 'āh*; Bogan, 85). The evil took the form of a huge boar, which rampaged in Oineus' orchards, destroying many trees. Oineus' son Meleager succeeded in killing it, but at the cost of many

huntmen's lives. Because of this, Artemis stirred up a war between the Kouretes and the Aetolians for the boar's head and hide.

The story recalls that of Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven in Tablet VI of the Gilgamesh epic. Because Gilgamesh had insulted her, Ishtar sent the Bull of Heaven against Uruk, although Anu pointed out that this would mean the ruin of Uruk's grain crops for the next seven years, presumably as a result of the animal's rampaging in the fields. Gilgamesh and Enkidu succeeded in killing it, but not before hundreds of young men had perished. (Cf. above on 6. 281 f.) Ishtar was angry again and caused more trouble.

10. 203 ff. The nocturnal spying expedition which forms the main substance of this interpolated rhapsody has been compared with those of Gideon in Jdg 7 10-15 and of David in 1 Sam. 26. 6-12 (Krenkel, 27, in more detail C. Fries, *Klio* 4, 1904, 235 f.). In both cases, as in the *Iliad*, two men make the excursion. David's exploit has more features in common with the Doloneia. He asks for a volunteer to accompany him, and Abishai offers to go. They find their way to the spot where the enemy king is sleeping, his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and his army lying round him. Abishai points out to David that God has delivered his enemy into his hand, and proposes killing him without ado. Similarly Diomedes suggests that someone else should accompany him (222), and out of the many who volunteer he chooses Odysseus. After catching and interrogating the Trojan spy Dolon, they find their way to the spot where the Thracian king Rhesus is sleeping, in the midst of his men, their arms on the ground beside them (470-5). Odysseus (the volunteer companion) points him out to Diomedes and proposes taking his horses and killing the men.

The stories here diverge, in that the Greek heroes do kill their victims, whereas David renounces the opportunity to kill Saul; he does, however, make off with a trophy, Saul's spear and water-jar, as Diomedes and Odysseus make off with the rather more spectacular prize of Rhesus' horses.

10. 246. In putting his trust in Odysseus, Diomedes says that 'with him accompanying me, we would come back safe even out of a burning fire'. Yahweh uses a similar image in giving his assurance to Israel (Isa. 43. 2; Bogan, 89):

When you ford the waters, I am with you ...
when you walk through fire, you will not be scorched,
and the flame will not consume you.

10. 496 f. As his doom approaches, Rhesus is troubled by a bad dream; he dreams of Diomedes himself. For this motif we may compare Hamuzi's dream, mentioned on p. 188, and Enkidu's in *Gilg.* VII i and 15. In the Tukulti-Ninurta epic (iii A 45') the doomed Kassite king collects bad dreams and omens.

11. 1848: *Exploits of Hector and Nestor*

11. 271. Here and in 17. 547-50 the rainbow is referred to as something set in the sky by Zeus as a sign (τέρας) for mortals. Cf. Gen. 9. 12-17 (Bogan, 93).

11. 53 f. Here and in 16. 459 Zeus causes drops of blood to fall from the sky, in the first case as a portent of slaughter, in the second as a mark of honour for his son Sarpedon who is about to be slain. In Joel 2 30 (= Heb. 3. 3; compared by Bogan, 94) Yahweh says, 'I will give portents in the heavens and on earth: blood, and fire, and columns of smoke'

11. 67-71. For the simile of the reapers see pp. 228 f. In the course of the following narrative a number of conventional oriental similes are employed: wolves, 72; lion, 113-19; fire, 155-7, 595; pain like birth-pangs, 269-71; enemy surrounded like wild boar, 414-18. Cf. pp. 246-51.

11. 200 f. Iris comes to Hector and tells him, 'Zeus has sent me to speak to you as follows'. See p. 193.

11. 531-7. Hector's galloping horses trample the corpses of the fallen, spattering the axle and hand-rail of his chariot with the blood thrown up by the hooves and wheels. The motif is repeated with Achilles' chariot at 20. 498-502.

It is strikingly paralleled in the account of the battle of Halule (691 BC) in the eighth campaign of Sennacherib. It is worth quoting the passage *in extenso*, to show how Homeric it is in manner, with its similes, description of the king's arming, and other motifs. Following a catalogue of the enemy's allies (twenty-four contingents), we read:

The gathering (of Elamite and Babylonian troops) joined up; like the onset of a swarm of locusts in springtime (cf. *Il.* 2. 469-73, 21. 12) they were rising up against me all together to do battle. The dust from their feet covered the face of the broad heavens like a heavy storm in severe cold weather (cf. *Il.* 3. 10-14). They had established their line before me at Halule on the bank of the Tigris; they had seized the approach to my watering-place, and were sharpening their weapons. As for me, to Aššur, Sin, Shamash, Bel, Nabu, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, Ishtar of Arbela, the gods in whom I trust, I prayed for success over the mighty foe. They at once heard my prayers (ἐκλυον αὐδῆς) and came to my aid. I raged like a lion (λέων ὤς). I put on my corslet; my helmet, emblem of battle, I

placed on my head (cf. *Il.* 3. 332, 336, etc.); my excellent battle-chariot, which flattens the foe, I hastily mounted in my heart's fury. The strong bow which Assur gave me I seized in my hands; the arrow that cuts off lives I grasped in my palm. Against the whole army of the evil enemy I gave forth a savage shout like a storm, I roared like Adad (cf. *Il.* 18. 215–24).

Sennacherib goes on to describe how he attacked the enemy like the onset of a raging storm and defeated them.

I made their blood run down on the broad earth like an inundation; my galloping steeds, my chariot-team, were plunging into the streams of their blood as into a river; the wheels of my battle-chariot, which lays low the wicked and the evil were bathed in blood and guts

(Chicago Prism, v 43 ff., ed. R. Borger, *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke*, 2nd ed., Rome 1979, i. 83 f.). The tentative suggestion of Burkert (1992), 119, 'one might even toy with the idea that some Greek singers had arrived in Assyria together with the mercenaries, and that he composed this song on the battle of Halule which so much pleased the king that it was incorporated in the official annals', will not, I imagine, recommend itself to many as the explanation of the passage. It represents the development of a native Assyrian tradition. The new motif of the blood-spattered chariot-wheels (already compared with the Homeric parallels by Wirth, 149 f.) is entirely in the spirit of Assyrian bloodthirstiness. Cf. below on 21. 218 ff. for an analogous case.

11. 632–7. Nestor has a hero-sized cup, so big that when it is full he is the only one who can easily lift it from the table. Compare the great cup of Baal in the Ugaritic banquet description quoted on p. 202: 'a great jar, mighty to behold, a cask (worthy) of men of the heavens; a holy cup no woman can look on it, a goblet, no goddess can regard it.'

11. 670–761. H. Mühlestein (as cited above on 7. 132–60) has pointed out that this exploit of the young Nestor's again contains elements that run parallel to the story of David and Goliath. Neleus tries to prevent Nestor from taking part in the battle, saying that he is too young and inexperienced (717 f., contradicting 683 f.); Saul says the same to David (1 Sam. 17. 33). Nestor, fighting without a chariot, kills an enemy cavalry leader and appropriates his chariot (718–21, 739–44); similarly David, fighting without a sword, fells Goliath and appropriates his sword (1 Sam. 17. 38–40, 50 f.). In both cases the enemy, seeing that their champion has fallen, turn and flee, pursued and slaughtered by the Pylians and the Hebrews respectively. In both narratives the pursuit continues to a certain specified place; the victors return from there with their booty, and the young hero is acclaimed by the people (761; 1 Sam. 18. 7).

1. 13: The washing away of the Achaean wall³⁹

When the Achaeans built the wall and ditch round their camp, Poseidon was indignant because they had given the gods no hecatombs, and he was afraid that their wall would be more famous in future than the walls of Troy which he and Apollo had built. Zeus told him not to worry: after the end of the war he could break the thing down, disperse it into the sea, and cover the site over again with the sands of the beach (7. 442–64). Now the poet looks ahead to that operation. He tells us that after the fall of the city and the departure of the Achaeans, Poseidon and Apollo levelled all the rivers of the Troad against the wall for nine days, while Zeus made the rain pour down without stopping. Poseidon 'led the way' with his trident in hand, dug out all the stone and timber parts of the structure into the waves, levelled the site, and covered it with the sands.

We have seen that the *Iliad* is heavily influenced, whether directly or indirectly, by the Gilgamesh epic, and specifically by the standard, twelve-tablet recension of that epic which included the episode where Enkidu's ghost came up from the underworld and was embraced by Gilgamesh. Anyone who was familiar with that version of the poem must have known the story of the Flood, which Ut-napishtim relates at length in Tablet XI. Does the present passage, although it describes only a localized flood, echo the Babylonian myth? It has a number of features that may suggest it:

- (i) The flood is caused by gods, in anger at the activities of men.
- (ii) There are many days of continuous rain, actually more than in the Babylonian account (nine as against six).
- (iii) Poseidon 'leading the way' with his trident recalls *Gilg.* XI 99–102,

Shullat and Hanish were marching in front,
the (god's) throne-bearers were marching over mountain and land;
Erragal was tearing out the mooring-posts,
Ninurta was marching, he opened the weirs.

- (iv) The final state of the site (30, 'he made it all level') may be compared with *Gilg.* XI 134, 'the flood-plain was level as a roof'.

It is also to be noted that this is the one Homeric passage in which the heroes are referred to as the ἡμίθεοι, the Half-gods (23), implying the Hesiodic idea that the Trojan War marked the end of a distinct historical era in which the earth was populated by a breed of men different from ourselves. The association of this era-close with a deluge seems signi-

³⁹ A version of this section has appeared in *Mus. Helv.* 52, 1995, 211–15.

ficant, since in Mesopotamian as well as biblical traditions (above, p. 314) the Flood marked the principal dividing-point between mythical eras.⁴⁰

But there is another question to consider. Where did the poet of the *Iliad* get the idea of diverting rivers against a wall to wash it away? This could never be a natural idea in Greece, where rivers were small and fortifications normally at a considerably higher level. It is much more appropriate to Mesopotamia, where mud brick was the standard building material and where the digging and repair of canals was a constant preoccupation. In fact a unique historical event of the early seventh century seems to underlie the Homeric invention, namely Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon in 689. In his inscriptions the Assyrian monarch describes how, after burning the city, he tore down its walls, temples, and ziggurats and threw them in the Arahtu, a channel connecting with the Euphrates.

In the midst of that city I dug canals, and levelled their earth in the waters. I destroyed the outlines of its foundations, and made it more level than the Flood did. So that in after days the site of that city and of the gods' houses should not be identifiable, I dissolved it in the waters and turned it into a flood-plain.

So that the site of that city should [not be identifiable], I tore up its ground and caused it to be carried down the Euphrates to the sea; its soil went all the way to Dilmun (Bahrein).⁴¹

It had always been customary for vanquished cities to be looted and burned, but the scale and manner of this Assyrian endeavour to erase the ancient enemy capital from the face of the earth were unprecedented. To find anything at all similar we have to go back to the third millennium, when Naram-Sin 'conquered the city of Kish and destroyed its wall, and made the river come out inside it' (*RIME* 2. 106 no. 6 iv 25'-39'); but that text does not speak of annihilating the city so as to leave no trace of it. Babylon was not in fact destroyed as totally as the inscriptions imply, but it did lie ruined and largely deserted for the next eleven years.

We have two viewpoints on the matter: one from Sennacherib's inscriptions, the other from those of his son and successor Esarhaddon, who adopted a different policy towards Babylonia and rebuilt the devastated city. He began the work of restoring it in 678 or 677 and continued through the decade. His account of what had befallen Babylon

begins with a description of how wickedness had come to prevail in Sumer and Akkad:

Then Marduk, chief of the gods, became furious, and devised evil to level the land and destroy its people. The Arahtu, a river of inundation, a raging flood, a wild swell, a powerful tide, a replica of the deluge, was brought in; it sent its waters through the city, its dwellings, its cult places, and made it a wilderness. The gods and goddesses who dwelt within it flew away like birds and went up to heaven; the people who dwelt there fled to another place and took refuge in an unknown land.⁴²

Marduk had originally 'written down' seventy years as the time that Babylon should remain waste. But when Esarhaddon became king, the god's merciful heart calmed down, and he 'inverted' the number, that is, he changed it from 1<(1.10 = 70) to <1 (10 1 = 11), and ordained the resettlement of the city after eleven years. Encouraged by consistently good omens and assured that this was the gods' will, Esarhaddon set to work. The first step was to clear the site of the vegetation that had overgrown it and to fill in the canals that Sennacherib had dug across it.

I mobilized my whole work-force and the entire land of Karduniaš (Babylon). They felled the trees and marsh reeds with axes and tore out the roots. I removed the water of the Euphrates from within it, and directed it to its former course.⁴³

Later, as he records how he restored the temples and images of the gods, Esarhaddon attributes the removal of the excess water to these deities themselves:

The gods and goddesses who dwelt within it, who had carried away the waters of overflow (dam-breach) and cloudburst—their appearance had turned dark: I renovated them from their sadly ruined state.⁴⁴

There are two significant differences of perspective between the Sennacherib and Esarhaddon inscriptions. Firstly, Esarhaddon avoids naming his father as the one responsible for the destruction: he represents it as the consequence of the gods' anger with Babylon. Secondly, whereas both kings refer to the mythical Flood as a term of comparison, it is Esarhaddon who develops the theme more vividly. Sennacherib only compares the final effect with that caused by the Flood; he does not liken his canals to the mythical cataclysm. It is Esarhaddon who portrays

⁴⁰ R. Scodel, *HSCP* 86, 1982, 33-50; cf. H. W. Singor, *Hermes* 120, 1992, 402. C. Fries, *Klio* 4, 1904, 247 f., had considered the passage only doubtfully relevant to the Babylonian Flood myth.

⁴¹ III R 14. 50-4 and *KAH* ii. 122. 36-9 in Luckenbill, 83 f., 137 f.; H. D. Galter, *Studia Orientalia* 55, 1984, 164 f., 169.

⁴² Borger, 13 f., Episodes 5 ff.

⁴³ Borger, 19, Episode 18.

⁴⁴ Borger, 23, Episode 32.

the diverted water as 'a river of inundation, a raging flood, a wild swell, a powerful tide, a replica of the deluge'.

When we compare the details of the Homeric account of the destruction of the Achacan wall with the Assyrian royal inscriptions, we see that it is not based merely on the rumour of a distant event, but reflects both Sennacherib's and Esarhaddon's official propaganda concerning that event. In some respects it shows a closer relationship to Sennacherib's account, in others to Esarhaddon's:

Destruction due to gods' displeasure:	E.
River waters channelled into site:	S., E.
Raging flood washed everything away:	E.
Foundations torn up and turned into the water:	S.
Débris washed out to sea:	S.
Site left level:	S.
Purpose: to deny posterity knowledge of the place:	S.
River(s) returned (by gods) to original bed:	E.

Moreover, the passage shows an amalgamation of the royal propaganda with elements drawn from the literary Flood myth to which both monarchs allude. This amalgam must have its origin in Assyrian court poetry. We know that poets celebrated exploits of Sennacherib's father Sargon and his grandson Assurbanipal; his own triumph over Babylon will not have gone unsung. A few years later, when Esarhaddon put his stamp on the situation, the poetic version will have been revised to reflect his view of events, but it would not be surprising if it still preserved elements of Sennacherib's. We have already seen (on 11. 531-7) how closely the poetry of the *Iliad* converges with Assyrian court composition precisely in the reign of Sennacherib.

12. 34-14. 152: *Advantage Hector*

12. 37. The Argives are 'laid low by the scourge of Zeus'. For this concept see p. 116.

12. 156-8. Missiles like a snowstorm: for this simile, and the parallel one at 278-87, see pp. 249 f.

12. 162. Asius smacks his thighs in chagrin. For this gesture cf. p. 200 with n. 101.

12. 322-8. Sarpedon reflects to his companion Glaucus that there is nothing to be gained by holding back from the fight: 'If by surviving this war we had some prospect of being immortal and ageless, I would not stand in the front line myself, or send you into battle; but as we are beset by countless mortal dangers, which no human being can escape, let us go and try our luck.' This is not the same as the argument used by Hector to

his wife at 6. 487-9 and by Callinus (1. 8-13) to the Ephesians, that every man's day of death is predetermined by fate, so that nothing he does will advance or postpone it. It is more closely related to the argument used by Gilgamesh in answer to Enkidu's misgivings about fighting Huwawa:

Who, my friend, can go up to heaven?
The gods d[well] with Shamash for ever,
but as for man, his days are numbered;
all his activity is just wind.
You, do you now fear death?
What about your warrior strength?
Let me go before you;
your voice can shout to me, 'Go on! Don't be afraid!'

(O)IV Yale fr., iv 5-12.)

13. 17-31. The description of Poseidon's progress from Samothrace to Aigai, and from there to the Troad, shows more than one orientализing feature. For the god's golden palace under the waters at Aigai, and the motif that he gets there in four great strides (20), see p. 113. When he leaves his palace and drives over the waves (27-9),

the sea creatures sported below him,
(coming) from all their lairs, and did not fail to recognize their lord,
and the sea parted, rejoicing.

This beautiful picture has its parallel in a Sumerian hymn. The poet celebrates the water god Enki's temple at Eridu, where in ancient times the Euphrates broadened out into the Persian Gulf. Built of silver and lapis lazuli, plated with gold, the temple stands on the water's edge with its foundations in the Abzu (= the Akkadian Apsu, the subterranean fresh-water ocean); this in itself may make us think of Poseidon's golden palace in the depths. Then we read how Enki goes forth from his temple seaward:⁴⁵

When Enki arises, indeed the fish arise in the waves.
He steps to the Abzu, a (splendid) sight,
he brings joy to the Engur (a synonym of Abzu).
In the sea there is numinous awe at him,
in the mighty river there is terror at him.
The river Euphrates arises before him (as before) a fierce south wind ...

⁴⁵ A.-H. A. Al-Fouadi, *Enki's Journey to Nippur: The Journeys of the Gods*, Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1969, 73 f., lines 80-5, 90-2. Dr. J. A. Black has kindly provided me with a fresh translation.

As he departs from the temple of Eridu,
the river responds to (lit. takes counsel with) its master:
its voice [is ...] the voice of a calf, the voice of a sweet(-natured) cow

Just as in Homer, the fish greet the god, the sea itself rejoices, the water
heaps itself up before 'its king'.⁴⁶

13. 59–65. Poseidon strikes the Aiante with his staff, filling them
with energy and making their arms and legs feel light. In the *Odyssey*
Circe and Athena transform people by similar means (cf. pp. 182 f.) For
the magic staff or wand wielded by a divinity, the touch of which effects
a transformation, cf. Judges 6. 21, where the Messenger of Yahweh
touches Gideon's meat and unleavened cakes with his staff, and a fire
springs up and consumes them (Bogan, 119).

Poseidon then flies off in the manner of a hawk. This is a simile – he
does not assume the form of a hawk – but clearly related to those other
Homeric passages where a deity does fly away in bird form. On this
motif see pp. 184 f.

13. 101–4. The Trojans, says Poseidon, formerly fled like deer. For
this simile cf. p. 248.

13. 363–9. Othryoneus had asked Priam for the hand of Cassandra,
offering to drive the Achaeans out of Trojan territory, and Priam had
agreed to this bargain. Cf. Cepheus' agreement with Perseus that he can
have Andromeda if he kills the sea-monster that is ravaging the land
(Apollod. 2. 4. 3). The Old Testament provides a couple of examples of
a similar motif, where a king promises his daughter to whoever can
defeat the enemy of the moment: Josh. 15. 16 f., 1 Sam. 17. 25, 18. 17
(Krenkel, 29; cf. Brown, 228).

14. 85–7. Odysseus opines that 'Zeus has given it to us to endure
hard fighting from youth to old age, so that we may all perish'. Cf. Josh.
11. 20 (Bogan, 387): 'for it came from Yahweh to strengthen their hearts
to come to battle with Israel, in order that they should be destroyed'.

14. 153–15. 219: The deception of Zeus

14. 161–86. Hera dresses and adorns herself for an amorous encounter.
This scene stands in a well-established oriental literary tradition; see pp.
203 f. It may be added that the ear-rings described in 182 f. (and
replicated at *Od.* 18. 297 f.) are of orientalizing type, made with the
technique of gold granulation introduced to Greece from Phoenicia in the
ninth century. See R. Janko's note in the *Cambridge Iliad commentary*,
iv. 177 f.

⁴⁶ Cf. also *Il.* 14. 392, where the sea surges up against the Achaean camp as Poseidon leads the
Greeks to battle, and *Alc.* fr. 307c ad fin.

14. 201–7 ≈ 302–6. Oceanus and Tethys as the primeval parents of
the gods (cf. 246) parallel Apsu and Tiamat in the Babylonian theology,
see p. 147. The statement that they have long been estranged from each
other by quarrelling looks like the trivialization of a detail from a
cosmogonic myth, since the separation of primeval parents who were
originally united is a familiar motif in such a context. Usually they are
Heaven and Earth, but here they are cosmic waters. The cosmogony in
Genesis involves a separation of the waters under the firmament from
those above it (1. 6 f.); but Oceanus and Tethys do not correspond to
these. As the source of all rivers and springs (*Il.* 21. 195–7), Oceanus
represents the ground water: in this aspect, if not in his aspect as the river
that flows all round the earth, he corresponds to Apsu. Tethys may once
have represented the sea, as she was to do again in later poetry, and it is
possible that her name derives from that of Tiamat (cf. p. 147). The
original union of the couple corresponds closely to that of Apsu and
Tiamat, who in the initial state of things as described in *Enūma eliš*
'mingled their waters in one' (1. 5). They later quarrel (1. 29–48) over
Apsu's proposal to destroy their children. A practical separation follows,
though the Babylonian poet does not, like the Homeric, represent this as
the expression of the marital discord, but as the result of Ea's assault on
Apsu and the latter's confinement beneath Ea's dwelling (1. 60–72).

14. 214–17. Aphrodite lends Hera the 'stitched, embroidered strap'
that she wears about her breast and that contains all her powers of
seduction:

ἐνθ' ἔνι μὲν φιλότης, ἐν δ' ἥμερος, ἐν δ' ὀαριστός
πάρφασις, ἣ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων.

In it is intimacy, in it is desire, in it is sweet-talk
persuasion, which deceives the mind of even the clever.

The idea that the love-goddess wears these abstractions about her body is
a striking one, hardly typical of Greek theology or poetic fancy. In fact it
has ancient roots in Mesopotamian hymnic literature. We have noted
elsewhere (p. 239) the Semitic idiom by which gods or human beings
may be said to be 'clothed' in various abstract qualities. But there are
more specific parallels. In the Sumerian poem *Enki and the World*
(*Order*, Enki reminds Inanna, the love-goddess, of her privileges, saying

C'est toi qui proclames [...],
Toi pour qui l'on a disposé le [...] en vue de [...],
Toi qui portes le vêtement 'Vigueur-des-mâles'.

(427–9; Bottéro–Kramer, 179.) In the Old Babylonian Ammi-ditana
hymn Ishtar is celebrated as

She of joy, clothed in love,
adorned with ripeness (lit. fruit), seductive charm, and sex.

(F. Thureau-Dangin, *RA* 22, 1925, 172. 5 f.; Seux, 39; Foster, 65.)

14. 238–41. In return for Hypnos' services, Aphrodite promises him a beautiful, imperishable gold chair and a footstool, which Hephaestus will make for him. Similarly Baal in the Ugaritic epic, hoping to win the support of the goddess Athirat, instructs Kothar the craftsman-god to make presents for her. He smelts gold and silver, and makes a lovely suite of furniture, including 'a divine seat with a back-rest, a divine footstool which he plated with (a shining metal)' (*KTU* 1. 4 i 34–6).

14. 256. For the motif of the chief god's anger on discovering that his plans have been thwarted, cf. p. 180.

14. 271. For one deity making another swear an oath, cf. pp. 181.

14. 287 f. Hypnos climbs a fir-tree on Ida so tall that it rises through the *aer* and reaches the *aither*. In the *Odyssey* (5. 239) such a tree is called 'sky-high' (οὐρανομήκης). Bogan (132) was only able to compare the tower of Babel, which was planned to have its top 'in the heavens' (Gen. 11. 4), but in the Gilgamesh epic (V vi 6) we read of a cedar of which the crown 'was piercing the sky'.

14. 315–28. Zeus' catalogue of the women and goddesses with whom he has made love has been compared with Gilgamesh's scornful recital of Ishtar's lovers in *Gilg.* VI ii–iii (Burkert [1992], 202 n. 18). The poetic purposes served by the two lists are very different, but they have in common the principle of collecting together a number of separate mythical events of a particular type and ordering them in a series. See also below, p. 411.

14. 347–9. As Zeus embraces Hera, a carpet of grass, herbs, and flowers springs up beneath them. This appears simply to serve their comfort and pleasure, but behind it probably lies the idea that the activity of the love-goddess makes the vegetation burgeon. Cf. *Hes. Th.* 194, where grass springs up under Aphrodite's feet as she steps onto the land. In a bilingual penitential prayer to Inanna-Ishtar (*OECT* 6. 78. 5–8; Seux, 159) the goddess is addressed as

creatress of the gods, who fulfils the functions [of the great gods],
who makes the verdure come forth, mistress of mankind.

14. 396 f. The noise of the battle is louder than that of a forest fire in the hills. Cf. Joel 2. 5 (Bogan, 133) on Yahweh's annihilating army:

As with the noise of chariots they dance on the mountain-tops,
as with the noise of a flame of fire devouring the stubble,
like a mighty host drawn up for battle.

15. 36 f. Hera calls Earth, Heaven, and the water of Styx to witness that her statement is true. Yahweh too, in making strong asseverations, calls heaven and earth to witness: Deut. 4. 26, 30. 19, 31. 28 (Bogan, 133).

15. 54 ff. The father of the gods tells god B to fetch god C, who is then sent as a messenger with instructions for god D. For this pattern in Akkadian epic see pp. 190 f.

15. 80–3. The speed of Hera's journey from Ida to Olympus is expressed with a unique simile: it was as when a much-travelled man dashes about in imagination from one place to another, thinking 'I should like to be there, or there'. There is something of a parallel in the Middle Egyptian story of Sinuhe. Explaining to the Pharaoh the impulse which had led him to flee from Egypt to foreign lands, he says, 'It was like a dream. As if a Delta-man saw himself in Yebu, a marsh-man in Nubia' (124–6; Lichtheim, i. 231).

15. 128 f. Athena castigates Ares for his folly, saying 'it's for nothing that you have ears to hear with' (ἦ νύ τοι αὐτῶς οὐκ ἀκούεμεν λόγῳ). The Hebrew prophets condemn in similar terms those 'who have ears to hear, but hear not': Isa. 43. 8, Jer. 5. 21, Ezek. 12. 2 (Bogan, 136).

15. 184–95. Poseidon complains about Zeus' demands, on the ground that they disregard a previous arrangement made among the gods. The tone of the outburst recalls *Atrahasis* II 266–74 ≈ 280–8 ≈ 332–40, where Enlil finds that mankind has survived the famine he ordained; he points out that the gods had agreed on a plan, and that it has not been kept to.

The agreement that Poseidon refers to, the casting of lots by the three sons of Kronos for dominion over the great divisions of the universe, is paralleled at the beginning of the same Babylonian epic; see pp. 109 f.

15. 220–17. 761: Advantage Hector

15. 372–6. Nestor reminds Zeus of previous promises made by the god. For this motif cf. p. 274 with n. 165.

15. 690–3. Hector is compared to an eagle attacking a flock of geese, cranes, or swans. For this simile (and the one at 16. 582 f.) cf. p. 248.

15. 721–3. Hector refers to the council of Trojan elders who had tried to dissuade him from fighting at the ships. This does not in fact correspond to anything in the preceding narrative of the *Iliad*. But the motif that the city elders advise the hero against a dangerous venture, and that he disregards their counsel and achieves success, recalls the Gilgamesh epic (II vi), where the elders of Uruk try in vain to prevent Gilgamesh from going on the expedition against Humbaba. There are other instances in Akkadian and Sumerian epic; cf. pp. 193 f. with n. 78.

15. 746. Ajax spears a dozen men. Cf. p. 212.

16. 34 f. Achilles is so obstinate that Patroclus questions his parentage: surely it was not Peleus and Thetis who gave him birth, but the grey sea and the rocky cliffs. Similarly, when the gods tell their father Enlil about Anzu, the terrible bird monster which has appeared on Mount Hehe, he wonders who can have given birth to such a creature, and Ea replies (*Anzu* [SBV] I 50–3):

Probably the fl[ood] waters [begot him],
the pure waters of the gods of the A[psu];
the bro[ad] earth conceived him,
and in (or: from) the rocky mountains he [was born].

16. 384–92. This is the famous simile describing the furious rainstorm that Zeus sends upon a community where justice is not respected and the gods are not feared. All their rivers are in spate and go roaring to the sea, destroying the works of men. Like 12. 13–33, this might be seen as an echo of the Flood myth (Krenkel, 30). The interesting point is that it is a flood sent as a punishment for human wickedness, as in the biblical account of Noah's Flood. On the other hand, it is merely a one-day affair, and the poet treats it not as something that happened just once in the past but as something ever liable to happen on an autumn day (385).

16. 453–7. Hera proposes that when Sarpedon is killed his body should be conveyed to Lycia, his homeland, so that his kinsmen may *tarkhūein* him with a grave-mound and stele. Zeus uses the same phrases when giving instructions for this at 674 f. The poet presumably knows of an actual monument of Sarpedon in Lycia, probably at Xanthos. The verb *tarkhūein* (otherwise only at 7. 85) is often thought to be an Anatolian borrowing, somehow connected with Hittite *tarḫ-* 'conquer' and the Luwian and Lycian divine names Tarhund- and Trqqas (P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, s.v.; R. Janko in the Cambridge *Iliad* commentary ad loc. is sceptical). If this is correct, the word may originally have denoted a special south Anatolian funerary ritual for someone graduating to heroic or divine status, and it may have entered the epic language in connection with Sarpedon specifically. At any rate it seems to have nothing to do with pickling or embalming, as the chance likeness to *tarikheuein* formerly led people to think.

16. 641–3. For the simile of the flies round the milk-pails cf. p. 249.

17. 4 f. Menelaus stands protectively over Patroclus' body like a cow over her calf. The Sumerian ruler Gudea of Lagash, on the inscribed cylinders which he set up to celebrate the building of a temple

in the 22nd century, uses a related comparison to describe his own concern for his edifice: 'Like a cow keeping an eye on its calf, he went in constant worry to the house' (A xix 24 f.; Jacobsen, 412). In Ugaritic epic 'Anat is described seeking her lost brother Baal: 'as the heart of a heifer for her calf, as the heart of a ew[e] for her lamb, so the heart of 'Anat after Baal' (*KTU* 1. 6 ii 6–9 = 28–30). In the Keret epic the people of Udm are said to bemoan the loss of their princess Hry as the heifer lorn for her calf (*KTU* 1. 15 i 5–7).

17. 98–101. Menelaus decides it is prudent to retreat, as Hector evidently has God on his side. For this motif cf. p. 131.

18. 1–19. 424: Achilles returns to the field

18. 108–10. 'Anger ... which, far sweeter than a distillation of honey, flows in men's breasts like smoke.' The expression 'sweeter than honey' (also at 1. 249, of speech) is paralleled in Hebrew (Ps. 19. 10, 119. 103, cf. Jdg. 14. 18; Bogan, 172). Perhaps not quite so natural is the picturing of anger as smoke. This may perhaps be compared with passages where God's anger ('*ap*, lit. 'nose') is said to 'smoke' ('*āšan*) against people: Ps. 74. 1, Deut. 29. 20 (Bogan, 171).

18. 115–21. Achilles accepts that he will die, like all other humans. The passage has already been compared with Gilgamesh's realization of his own mortality. We may also compare the lines which Aqhat speaks when he rejects as insincere 'Anat's offer of immortality in exchange for his bow (*KTU* 1. 17 vi 35–8):

'A man, for his final portion what does he get?
What does a man get as his future lot?
Plaster will be poured [on] my head,
quicklime on top of my skull:
[...] the death of all I shall die;
even I shall certainly die.'

18. 134–7. In preparation for Achilles' going forth to fight, Thetis will go to the divine smith to obtain a set of armour for him. In the context of the *Iliad* this is necessitated by the loss of his previous armour. But going to a smith for new weapons as a prelude to undertaking an armed excursion was an ancient Mesopotamian motif (Szabó, 68; Petriconi, 339). At any rate, in the Old Babylonian Gilgamesh epic (Yale fr., iv 26 ff.), before setting out on the expedition against Huwawa, Gilgamesh proposes to Enkidu that they go to the forge for weapons; they do so, and the craftsmen cast axes, swords, and blades for them. This step in the narrative already has a place in the Sumerian *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (recension A, 54 f.).

18. 161-4. The use of lion similes has been commented on elsewhere, but this one,

And as a tawny lion in his great hunger cannot be chased
away from a cadaver by the shepherds of the fields,
so those two armed warriors, the Ajaxes, could not
frighten Priam's son Hector away from the corpse,

has an especially close parallel in Isaiah (31. 4):

As the lion or the young lion grows over his prey,
against whom a complement of shepherds is called out:
at their voices he is not terrified, and does not cower from their uproar;
so the Lord of Hosts will come down (to protect Jerusalem).

It has to be said that Isaiah uses the simile less aptly than the Homeric poet. I should infer from this not that Isaiah knew the *Iliad*, but that he knew some Semitic martial narrative poetry in which such similes were routine.

18. 176 f. Iris tells Achilles that Hector plans to cut the head off Patroclus' body and impale it on a stake. Gordon (1955), 54, compares the treatment of Saul's body in 1 Sam. 31. 9 f. The head is cut off, and the body fastened to the wall of Bethshan. Impaling enemy heads in celebration of victory was also an Assyrian practice, as Sarah Morris points out in Carter and Morris (edd.), *The Ages of Homer* (as ch. 3, n. 230), 226 f.).

18. 219-21. For the comparison of Achilles' war-shout to the sound of a trumpet cf. p. 244.

18. 369-482. Thetis visits Hephaestus at his house and workshop and asks him to make equipment for her son. The scene is strongly reminiscent of the episode in the Baal epic where Baal sends his servant to the house of Kothar, the craftsman-god, asking him to make gifts for Athirat (*KTU* 1. 4 i, Gordon [1962], 194 f.). When Hephaestus sets to work (468),

he went to the bellows,
turned them to the fire and ordered them to work,
and the bellows blew in the crucibles, all twenty,
emitting a goodly air-stream every way ...
He put tireless bronze in the fire, and tin,
and precious gold, and silver. Then he set
his great anvil on its stand, and took in his hand
his powerful hammer, and in the other hand his tongs.

Compare the Ugaritic text (24 ff.):

Heyan went up to the bellows; in Hasis' hand were the tongs.⁴⁷
He smelted silver, he plated gold;
he smelted silver into thousands (of pieces),
he smelted gold into myriads.

Each text goes on to catalogue the objects made by the divine smith. Hephaestus begins with the shield, which he decorates richly with inlay work representing scenes from human and animal life. Among Kothar's artefacts is an inlaid table (39-41),

a godly table, which he filled (i.e. inlaid all over)
with the crawling species of the earth's foundations.

It may be recalled that in another poem Kothar makes a weapon (a multi-furrowed bow) for a human hero, Aqhat (*KTU* 1. 17 v). He brings it in person to Aqhat's father Daniel, and he presumably made it at the instance of Daniel's divine father, El, just as Hephaestus makes armour for Achilles at the instance of Thetis.

18. 509-15. The scenes depicted on the shield include a city under attack; on the walls could be seen the women and children and the men too old to fight. (Similarly in [Hes.] *Sc.* 237 ff., where the women are described as screaming and tearing their cheeks.) This corresponds to a long-established motif of oriental art where assaults on cities are represented. I say oriental; the earliest example is in fact Mycenaean, but there were no doubt oriental prototypes behind this. The artefact in question is the silver 'siege rhyton' from Shaft Grave IV.⁴⁸ It shows a city on a hill, with battle raging around it, and a crowd of frantic women postulating from the walls. A temple relief at Karnak depicts Merenptah's attack on Askalon near the end of the thirteenth century: the top of the wall is thronged with men and women, most of whom are looking up to heaven with arms raised in supplication to the gods.⁴⁹ The *Iliad* poet was probably inspired here, as in the whole conception of the decoration of the shield, by Cypro-Phoenician metal bowls of the kind described on pp. 99 f., with their elaborate multiple scenes of action. (At 23. 741-7 he actually refers to a silver crater of outstanding beauty, fashioned by Σιδόνες πολυδαίδαλοι and brought across the sea by Phoenician sailors; cf. *Od.* 4. 615-19 = 15. 115-19.) One such found at

⁴⁷ Heyan and Hasis are both names of Kothar.

⁴⁸ Illustrated, e.g., in H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments*, 142 fig. 4; E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, pl. xiv.; S. P. Morris, *AJA* 93, 1989, 528.

⁴⁹ A. Spalinger, *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Archaeology* 8, 1977/8, pl. vi facing p. 50; S. P. Morris in *The Ages of Homer* (as ch. 3, n. 230), 236.

Amathus actually shows in its outer register a city under attack, with defenders standing on the walls.⁵⁰

18. 570 f. On the Linos song see p. 44.

19. 91–131. The damaging force in human decision-making known as Ate is here portrayed in terms of a vivid personification, as already in 9. 505–7. She is a daughter of Zeus, but she walks on the heads of mortals, with pernicious effect. The myth told here explains that Zeus was angry because she had misled him, and he hurled her down from heaven, thus determining that this harmful creature's domain should in future be restricted to the earth.

There have been previous references to Zeus throwing gods out of heaven (cf. at 1. 590–4), but in the case of Ate there is an excellent parallel in an Old Assyrian incantation against the demon Lamaštu (for whom see p. 59):

She is (number?) one, she is holy ...
offspring of a god, daughter of Anu;
for her ill will, her base counsel,
Anu her father dashed her down from heaven to earth,
for her ill will, her disruptive counsel.
Her hair is loose, her private parts are stripped.
She goes straight to the godless man.

(W. von Soden, *Or. N.S.* 25, 1956, 142 f.; Foster, 59.) Lamaštu's ugly and dishevelled appearance may recall that of the Prayers in the earlier Ate passage, 9. 503; they too are daughters of Zeus, but lame, wrinkled, and cross-eyed. Like Ate, Lamaštu makes straight for her human victims.

19. 166. The knees are mentioned as especially weakened by hunger, and so again at 354. Bogan, 191, compared Ps. 109. 24, 'my knees are weak through fasting'.

19. 206–14. Achilles proposes that the Achaeans should fight on, taking no food until sunset, when they will have taken vengeance for the outrage they have suffered. As Bogan (193) pointed out, we find the same motif at 1 Sam. 14. 24:

And the Israelite was hard driven that day, for Saul laid an oath on the people, saying 'Cursed is the man who eats food before evening and I am avenged on my enemies.' And none of the people tasted food.

⁵⁰ D. Harden (as ch. 1, n. 27), 187 (178) fig. 53; G. Markoe (as ch. 2, n. 110), 172–4, 248 f.

Achilles' proposal is rejected, but he himself sticks to his programme. The elders gather round him, begging him to take a meal, but he refuses and says he will hold out till sunset (303–8). Here there is a close parallel with David's mourning for Abner (2 Sam. 3. 35; Bogan, 193):

And all the people came to get David to eat some bread while it was still day. But David swore, saying, 'May God do thus to me, and thus again, if I taste food or anything at all before sunset.'

19. 404–18. One of Achilles' horses speaks to him; Hera makes it 'vocal' (407). Nineteenth-century scholars (Burr, 526; Krenkel, 32) compared the story of Balaam's ass, which we have already had cause to cite more than once. After the god-fearing animal has shied away from Yahweh's Messenger three times and been struck each time by its hunter, Yahweh opens its mouth, and it asks Balaam why he keeps hitting it (Num. 22. 28). Balaam replies, showing no more surprise than Achilles does at the creature's use of human speech. There is then a short further exchange of words before Yahweh opens Balaam's eyes and he sees what the donkey's problem was.

It is now possible to refer also to a Hittite text (Dirlmeier, 27 f.). In the *Song of [Kumarbi]* (A iii 21 ff.; Hoffner, 42 § 18–20) the storm-god Teššub converses with his bull Šeri. In this case it is Teššub who initiates the dialogue, boasting that he has overcome all his opponents. The bull warns him against being over-confident. Achilles' horse also issues a warning, though of a rather different kind.

20. 1–21. 525: The gods step in

20. 61–6. At the noise of the battle, in which the gods themselves are participating, and which Zeus accompanies with thunder and Poseidon with an earthquake, Hades in the underworld is alarmed; he is afraid the earth may be broken open and the grim mansions of decay, which the gods abhor, exposed to view. We have already met in Hesiod (*Th.* 850–2; above, p. 302) the motif that the denizens of the lower world tremble at the noise of a cataclysm in the upper. But there are further oriental parallels for the Homeric passage. When Ishtar goes down to the underworld and demands that the gatekeeper let her in, she threatens (*Descent of Ishtar* 16–20):

If you do not open the gate and I do not get in,
I will strike the door, I will break the bolt,
I will strike the door-frame, I will overthrow the doors;
I will bring up the dead, they will devour the living;
above the living the dead will multiply!

Here as in Homer we have the dangerous potentiality (not realized in the event) that the hitherto unbroken boundary between the upper and lower worlds will be breached, and the ghastly realm of death, which should be sealed away, will spill out into the light. The same threat by a godless recurs in a briefer form (without the door-smashing) in two other poems: *Gilgamesh* VI 96–100 and *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV) v 9'–12' and 25'–27'. We can compare also Helios' threat in *Od.* 12. 382 f. to go down and shine for the dead if Zeus does not agree to what he wants—again a reversal of the upper and lower worlds.

In Job 26. 5–13 we find a hymnic recital of Yahweh's accomplishments, including references to the ancient myth of his defeat of the marine serpent Rahab (12–13). It is in the context of this theomachy, probably, that verses 5–6 had their original setting:

The mighty dead writhe in torment below,
the waters and their inhabitants < >:
Sheol is naked before him,
and there is no covering for Abaddon.

Here again we have the motif of the underworld (Sheol, Abaddon) being stripped open and laid bare to the sky.

20. 242. 'Zeus increases or diminishes men's prestige, as he wishes.' A typically Semitic view of divinity; see pp. 267 f.

21. 12–14. For this simile of the locusts see p. 246.

21. 49–52. Achilles finds Lycaon defenceless because he has laid down his weapons under the stress of sweat and fatigue. There is a faint parallel for this motif in *Anzu*, where Ea instructs Ninurta not to let the battle against Anzu slacken but to tire him out, so that he lets his pinions fall; then he will be able to cut them off and disable him. This is what Ninurta does. Both are 'bathed in the sweat of battle', Anzu grows weary, and lets his pinions fall. (*Anzu* II 105–8 – 128–31, III 8–11.)

21. 88. Priam's polygamy (cf. 24. 497) evidently reflects the conception that an Anatolian king ran a very different sort of household from an Achaean one (cf. Hall, 43). It has been compared with the polygamy of David, Solomon, and other Israelite kings (Krenkel, 33).

21. 218–20. The river is so blocked with corpses that its waters cannot find a way past; they are dammed up. The motif recalls the boast of Shalmaneser III on his monolith, III R 8 ii 100 f. (cf. Schott, 101 n. 4; the date is 854 BC), 'I overcame the Orontes with their corpses as (with) a causeway'.

21. 237. The river overflows, 'bellowing like a bull'. Similarly in the Babylonian account of the Flood it 'was as loud as a bull' (*Atr.* III 125).

21. 446 f. Poseidon built the walls of Troy. For the idea of the city built or fortified by a god cf. p. 129 with n. 123.

21. 522 f. 'As when the smoke goes up and reaches the broad heaven from a burning city, sent up by the gods' wrath': cf. Josh. 8. 20 (Hogan, 207; Brown, 159), 'and the men of Ha'ai looked back, and saw that the smoke of the city was going up to heaven'. Yahweh had told Joshua that he would give the city into his hand.

21. 526–22. 515: The death of Hector

22. 20. Achilles, having been decoyed away from Hector by Apollo, tells the god 'I would get my own back on you if I had the means'. Enkidu speaks to Ishtar in similar terms after she has sent the Bull of Heaven against Uruk and he and Gilgamesh have killed it. He tears the creature's shoulder off and flings it at her, saying 'I wish I could get you too! I wish I could make you like that! I wish I could hang up its guts and your side by side!' (*Gilg.* VI v 11–15; compared by Dirlmeier, 21).

22. 63 f. Priam anticipates that at the fall of Troy he will see, among other horrors, infants being hurled to the ground. For this as a feature of oriental military etiquette cf. 2 Ki. 8. 12, Ps. 137. 9, al. (Bogan, 208).

22. 153–6. Hector and Achilles run past the water-tanks where the Trojan women and girls used to do their laundry 'formerly in peacetime, before the sons of the Achaeans came'. Commentators have often admired the poignancy of the contrast between the happy past and the harrowing present.⁵¹ But something similar can be quoted from the *Numerian Lament for Ur* (213–16; Jacobsen, 460):

In its high gate and gangways corpses were piled,
in all the wide festival streets they lay placed head to shoulder,
in all the lanes and alleys corpses were piled,
and in the open spaces where the country's dances (once) were held
people were stacked in heaps.

22. 209–13. Zeus takes his balance and weighs the fatalities of Achilles and Hector against each other. Hector's goes down, which means that he is the doomed one in the combat that is now proceeding between the two heroes. The poet has used the same idea at 8. 69–74, but less aptly, for there Zeus weighs the fates of the two armies, each of which is assigned one collective 'fatality' (κῆρ θανάτοιο). It may also have been used in the Cyclic *Aethiopis*, when Achilles fought and killed Memnon. At any rate, Aeschylus adopted and adapted it in his *Psykhostasia*, in which Zeus weighed against each other not the fates of

⁵¹ Cf. N. J. Richardson in the Cambridge *Iliad* commentary, vi. 123 f.

Achilles and Memnon but their life-souls (ψυχαι); ancient commentators condemned him for having misunderstood Homer.⁵² A late Mycenaean amphora from Enkomi in Cyprus, showing two men riding out in a chariot and in front of them a figure holding a balance, was insistently interpreted by M. P. Nilsson⁵³ as an early piece of evidence for the concept: he took the balance-wielder to be Zeus, determining the fate of the combatants. Possible evidence from a still earlier date is provided by scale balances of gold foil in early Mycenaean graves, the pans in at least one example being each decorated with a butterfly, which might represent a soul (E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age*, 298 and pl. xvii A).

The whole notion of assessing things by weighing them in a balance is rooted in ancient Near Eastern mercantilism. One may recall the satisfying story (Dan. 5. 5–28) of Belshazzar's feast and the Aramaic riddle that appeared on the wall, *mn' mn' tql wprsyn*, meaning ostensibly 'a mina, a mina; a shekel, and (two?) halves'. Daniel reinterpreted the words as 'numbered—numbered—weighed—divided (and also) Persians', all with reference to the king and his kingdom. Perhaps they originally bore the more straightforward symbolism of weights being placed in alternate scale-pans (hence the repetition of *mn'*) and of one side failing to balance the other. In any case a symbolic weighing of the king's life is implied.

In Egyptian eschatology we find the doctrine that the soul of the dead is weighed against a feather to see if it is laden with any guilt. This has been adduced as an analogy for the Homeric scenes since Otto Gruppe's *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* of 1906 (i. 681 n. 6; cf. Bernal, ii. 262 f.), though it has little in common with them apart from the basic image of the balance. More recently Jaan Puhvel (*AJP* 104, 1983, 222; *Homer and Hittite*, 10 f.) has cited a Hittite text that refers to lifting up scales and weighing out the king's long years (*KBo* xxi. 22 obv. 18 f.)—he takes this to be a symbolic ritual act—and another, a royal mortuary text, where an old woman weighs some mortar (= human clay) against silver, gold, and gemstones (*KUB* xxx. 15 + xxxix. 19 obv. 26–8 = *CTH* 450; H. Otten, *Hethitische Totenrituale*, Berlin 1958, 68; cf. Gurney [1977], 60, who mentions another such weighing in an exorcism ritual). Again, the parallels with the *Iliad* scenes are far from exact. But the latter must belong in the same broadly oriental tradition.

22. 262–7. Achilles informs Hector that just as there is no peace or love between lions and men, or wolves and lambs, so there can be none

between the two of them. This must have been a cliché of oriental rhetoric. We have a report of a letter sent by the twelfth-century Elamite king Kutur-Nahhunte to Babylon claiming the vacant throne. Referring to the traditional enmity between the two countries, he writes:

Shall livestock and ravening wolf come to terms? Shall firm-rooted thorn and soaring raven love one another? Shall raven and venomous snake come to terms? [] Shall bone-gnawing dog come to terms with mongoose? Shall dragon come to terms with blood-letting bandit? What king of Elam is there who provided for Esagila and ...?

(A. Jeremias, *MVAG* 21, 1917, 92. 10 ff.; trans. Foster, 284.) There are further excellent parallels in Hellenistic Jewish writing, as *Jubilees* 37. 21 f. (Esau to Jacob), 'if the wolves can make peace with the lambs so as not to devour them or do them violence, ... then shall there be peace in my heart towards you; and if the lion becomes the friend of the ox and makes peace with him, ... then will I make peace with you'; *Ecclusiasticus* 13. 16–19. The prophets' inversion of the idea takes us back to the eighth century: 'The wolf shall sojourn with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid', etc. (Isa. 11. 6–8, cf. 65. 25; adduced by Bogan, 211).

22. 297. When Hector realizes that his doom is sealed, he cries, 'O *anax!* The gods have called me to my death.' We find an exclamation of identical form in the biblical account of an event in the mid ninth century. When the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom marched against the rebellious Mesha', king of Moab, by a roundabout desert route, and found themselves waterless, the king of Israel exclaimed, 'Ahah! Yuhweh has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab!' (2 Ki. 3. 10). The words translated 'called' in the two passages, *καλεῖν* and *qārā*, have a similar range of meanings, from 'summon' to 'invite'.

22. 337–43. Hector makes a last plea for mercy with failing strength. For this motif see p. 216.

22. 351. Achilles declares that he would not ransom Hector's body even if Priam were to have it weighed against gold. Aeschylus and later writers represented this as actually done when the body was eventually ransomed, though it is not what happens in the Homeric account in *Iliad* 24.⁵⁴ The idea of valuing a man by weighing him against precious metals appears also in Theognis (77 f.), who says that a trustworthy man is worth his weight in gold or silver at a time of civil discord. Like the idea of weighing personal fates or lives against one another (above on 22.

⁵² See S. Radt, *Aeschylus* (TrGF iii), 375.

⁵³ *Bull. Société des Lettres de Lund*, 1932–33, ii = *Opuscula Selecta*, i. 443 ff.; *The Mycenaean Religion*, 2nd ed., 34–6; *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, i³. 366 f. with 367 n. 1.

⁵⁴ See Radt, *op. cit.*, 365.

209–13), it reflects the institutionalized international commerce of the ancient Near East, and has parallels in eastern texts. A Hittite ritual was mentioned above in which it is actually a dead king who is symbolically weighed (in the form of mortar) against gold and other precious substances. When Keret in the Ugaritic epic sets out with his army to win the princess of his desire, he calls at the shrine of Athirat in Tyre and vows (*KTU* 1. 14 iv 40–3):

'If I take Hry into my house,
bring the girl to my court,
I will give the double of her in silver,
and the treble of her in gold.'

And in Lamentations (4. 2) we read of 'the esteemed sons of Zion, who were weighed out against refined gold'.

22. 391–4. Achilles calls upon the Achaeans to sing a paean as they return to the ships with Hector's body:

'We have won a great glory: we have slain lordly Hector,
to whom the Trojans in their city prayed as to a god.'

This resembles in form and spirit the triumph song of the Philistines when they saw Samson brought to Gaza in fetters (Jdg. 16. 24):

'Our god has given into our hand Samson our enemy,
the ravager of our land, who multiplied our slain.'

This was associated with a sacrifice to Dagon, and had therefore a religious character, like the Greek paean. There are other biblical references to victory songs. Those of the Hebrews are sung especially by women, like the famous acclamation at 1 Sam. 18. 7, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands'. On these songs cf. O. Eissfeldt *The Old Testament. An Introduction*, 99 f. From the Ugaritic corpus we may perhaps compare the excited utterance of 'Attart when Baal makes an end of Yammu (*KTU* 1. 2 iv 28–30):

'Scatter(?) (him), O victorious [Baal],
scatter(?) (him), O rider on the clouds,
for prin[ce Yammu] is our captive,
[] judge River is our captive!'

22. 412–36. Hector is lamented firstly by his father, who is utterly distraught and rolling in the dirt, then by his mother, who is described as leading the Trojan women in wailing (ἀδινού ἐξήρχε γόοιο) as if it were a formal mourning ritual. A more formal ritual is described at 24. 719

after the body has been brought back to Troy. There Hector's wife Andromache first, holding his head in her hands, secondly his mother, and finally Helen. In the Akkadian fragment mentioned above in the note on 24. 719, the person who 'wailed like an ecstatic' spoke for a few lines, addressing the high officials, and holding something (the object is lost in the text); then the king's weeping mother was apparently described as wailing in her turn, addressing her dead son, as Hecuba does.

At 425 Priam says that his grief for Hector, his favourite son, will carry him down to Hades. Similarly when Jacob mourns for Joseph, believing him to be dead, he rejects all attempts to console him, saying 'I shall go down to my son, mourning, to Sheol'. And when Benjamin is sent for, Jacob refuses to let him go with Reuben, saying 'no harm should befall him 'you will make my grey hair go down to dust with grief'. (Gen. 37. 35, 42. 38, cf. 44. 29–31, Krenkel, 34.)

22. 447–74. When Andromache hears the wailing from the wall she is alarmed and rushes there. On discovering what has happened she faints, and her female in-laws hold her until she comes round. There is an analogous scene in the *Song of Ullikummi*, when Teššub is fighting the earth monster. His wife Hebat is worried that he may have been killed, and sends a messenger to find out. When she sees the messenger returning, 'Hebat almost fell from the roof; if she had taken a step, she would have fallen from the roof. But the temple-women took hold of her and did not let go of her' (III A ii 8–10; Hoffner, 58 § 48; Webster 1960, 112 f.).

The poetic effect of portraying the anxiety of a warrior's female nearest and dearest, and her ignorance of what has happened, is also illustrated in one of the oldest Hebrew poems, the Song of Deborah. A portion of it is devoted to the heroic deed of Jael, who drove a tent-peg through the head of the sleeping Canaanite commander, Sisra. After relating his death, the poet continues (Jdg. 5. 28–30):

Behind the window she was looking down,
the mother of Sisra cried out behind the lattice:
'Why is his chariot delayed in coming?
Why are his team's hoof-beats late?'
The wisest ones of her ladies replied,
indeed she returned answer to herself:
'Are they not finding and dividing the booty?
A womb or two per head for the lads;
some looted dyed fabrics for Sisra,
a coloured wrap or two he is getting for my neck.'

23. 1-24. 804: The funeral of Patroclus. The ransoming of Hector

23. 82-92. Patroclus asks that his bones and Achilles' be buried in the same urn. Bogan, 219, compared the story of the prophet of Bethel who instructed his sons to bury him (when he died) in the same grave as the Judacan prophet who had just been killed by a lion and whom he had buried; 'lay my bones to rest beside his bones' (1 Ki. 13. 31).

23. 110-257. The funeral of Patroclus is described in some detail. He is borne to his place of cremation in a great chariot procession of armed warriors, followed by a throng of foot-soldiers; they all cut off some of their hair and throw it on the body. It is placed atop a huge pyre. Many sheep and cattle are sacrificed; the body is covered in their fat, and their flayed carcasses are heaped all round. Jars of honey and grease (ἄλειφαρ) are set beside the bier. Four horses, two of Patroclus' dogs and a dozen Trojan captives are killed and thrown on the pyre, which is then set alight. All through the night Achilles pours wine on the ground with invocations of Patroclus' soul. Wine is also used, when morning comes, to extinguish the last of the flames. The bones of Patroclus are picked out, wrapped in folds of fat, and placed in a golden bowl, which is covered with a fine linen cloth and put aside to await the addition of Achilles' bones in due course. Meanwhile a tumulus is raised over the pyre. Some of these procedures recur in the more summary accounts of Hector's funeral in 24. 777-804, where the funeral is concluded with a banquet in the palace, and of Achilles' in *Od.* 24. 43-84.

Parallels for some of these usages are provided by certain Greek archaeological sites, especially the tenth-century warrior burial at Lefkandi, the eighth- and seventh-century royal burials at Cyprian Salamis, and others at Eretria (c. 700) and the Euboean colony of Pithecusa. See J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 349-51; N. J. Richardson in the Cambridge *Iliad* commentary, vi. 182, 186-8, 197, 199 f. However, there are also some striking parallels in Hittite royal funerary ritual as laid down in a text from Hattusa (*KUB xxx.* 15 and others = *CTH* 450; Gurney [1952], 164-9; [1977], 59-63; H. Otten, *Hethitische Totenrituale*, 66; Puhvel, 19). Before the cremation an ox is sacrificed and a libation poured to the dead man's soul. The pyre burns through the night, and as soon as it is light, women go to extinguish it with beer, wine, and *walhi* (a beverage often mentioned in rituals). They collect the bones and put them in a silver bowl that contains fine oil; then they take them out again and lay them on a linen cloth, under which lies a 'fine garment', and they wrap them up in the latter. The parcel is set on a seat at a table, and both it and the women are provided with a breakfast of hot loaves and drinks: 'three times they give his soul to drink'. There

are sacrifices of oxen and sheep to the Sun-goddess of the underworld in the soul of the deceased. The bones are then conveyed to the *anabulum* and laid on a bed there. During the days that follow there are libations, and on the eighth day a sacrifice of oxen, sheep, horses, and *walhi*, apparently a holocaust. The particular points of similarity to the Hittite ritual are: animal sacrifices, including sheep, cattle, and horses, at least some of which are burned; cremation, the pyre being allowed to burn through the night; the quenching of the fire at first light with wine and other drinks; the making of drink offerings to the soul of the departed; the immersion of the bones in a bowl of oil or fat, their covering with a fine cloth, and their eventual interment; solemn meals.

For the jars of honey and grease (ἄλειφαρ) that are set beside Patroclus' bier (170; and Achilles', *Od.* 24. 67 f.) we can compare *Gilg.* VIII v 6'-8', where Gilgamesh fills bowls with honey and butter (*himētu*) and sets them on a table in the open air as part of the ceremonies for *Ishtar*; the two substances are often associated in Mesopotamian ritual.

For the motif of the fire that is induced to burn by prayer (192-218) cf. 1 Ki. 18. 22-40, 1 Chr. 21. 26 (Gordon [1962], 61 f.).

23. 222 f. Achilles' grief for Patroclus as he tends the pyre is compared to that of a father for his son. Gilgamesh, in his lament for *Ishtar*, says (*Gilg.* VIII i 13): 'Let [the steppe] lament [like your father], the fields like your mother.' Yahweh exhorts the daughter of Zion to 'make mourning (as) for an only son' (Jer. 6. 26, cf. Amos 8. 10; Bogan, 220).

24. 80. Iris dives into the sea and sinks like the lead weight on a fisherman's line. Bogan, 226, compared the simile in the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15. 10), where the Egyptians, pursuing the Hebrews across the Red Sea, 'sank like lead in the great waters'.

24. 170 f. For the motif of mortal fear in the presence of a deity, who says 'Do not be afraid', see p. 185.

24. 310-21. Priam asks Zeus for a sign (an eagle) to assure him of his support, and Zeus duly sends it. The motif appears also in the *Odyssey* (3. 173 f., 20. 98-121). Similarly Gideon asks Yahweh to confirm that he is to be the agent of Israel's deliverance by making a fleece wet with dew overnight while the surrounding ground remains dry. Yahweh accomplishes this. The next night, just to be on the safe side, Gideon requests the contrary miracle, and once again Yahweh obliges. (*Jdg.* 6. 36-40; Bogan, 227.)

24. 331-469. Zeus sends Hermes to guide Priam safely and invisibly through the enemy. There are several things in this episode that call for comment or back-reference.

1. For the general principle of the divine escort cf. above on 6, 171 (p. 366).

2. For lines 340–4, where Hermes puts on his wind-swift sandals and takes his rod into his hand, see p. 191.

3. For his adoption of the guise of a young man (347 f.), and his revelation of his divine status at the end of the encounter (460 f.), see p. 183.

4. For his casting sleep upon the guards so that his protégé may pass unobserved into the enemy camp (443–6), see p. 182. Burkert (1991) 170 f., refers also to an episode in the Annals of Mursili (CTH 61, II III 33 f.; A. Götz, *MVAG* 38, 1933, 126), where the Hittite king deploys his army in a swift night movement against an enemy, 'and my lord the heroic Storm-god had commanded my lord (the god) Hasamili, and he had me concealed, and no one saw me. And I went and smote the land Pikainaressa (while it was) in bed.'

24. 527 f. Zeus is stated to have two storage-jars set in his floor, one of blessings and one of banes, and from these he dispenses to mankind. Nothing closely similar is known from oriental texts, but it is possible to see a related conception in the Hebrew idea that Yahweh has 'stores' ('ôšārôt) laid up in heaven, from which come the fructifying rains, the wind, or snow and hail (Deut. 28. 12, Ps. 135. 7, Jer. 10. 13, 51. 16, Job 38. 22).⁵⁵ In the Deuteronomy passage the dispensation of rain is associated with that of blessing the work of men's hands. We may also recall those passages, cited on pp. 141 f., where manna, rain, or unspecified 'blessing' is dispensed out of the doors or windows of heaven.

24. 719–75. On these funeral laments cf. above at 22. 412–36.

CONCLUSION

The proper literary parallels to Homer are to be found in the oral epic literature of Celtic Europe. . . The Homeric epics themselves betray no influence from the Near East.⁵⁶

Few, I imagine, will wish to uphold that opinion today, or tomorrow, or ever again. We have seen that the *Iliad*, at least, is pervaded by themes and motifs of Near Eastern character. They are, it is true, by no means

evenly distributed. They are predominantly associated with two particular strands in the poem's fabric: the divine comedy, and Achilles' tragedy.

In the case of the gods we can illustrate their antics with parallels taken now from Mesopotamian literature, now from Hittite, now from Ugaritic or Hebrew. It is not that the Greek poet is drawing capriciously from models in different countries; it is rather that there is a broad stream of international tradition, the present evidence for which is somewhat fragmentary. But in the case of Achilles we are faced with the inescapable fact of a special relationship with one particular oriental text: the *Gilgamesh* epic. The parallels are too numerous and specific to allow of any other explanation.

We can even say which recension of the *Gilgamesh* epic it must have been. For if the story of Achilles and Patroclus as a whole is shaped by that of *Gilgamesh* and Enkidu, the memorable scene in which Patroclus' ghost returns and Achilles embraces it can only come from the 'standard', twelve-tablet version of the Akkadian epic, the version in which to the unified Middle Babylonian *Groesbeek* which ended with *Gilgamesh*'s return to Uruk there was more or less accidentally subjoined, as Tablet XII, the alien fragment which contained the scene with Enkidu's ghost.

It is time now to turn to the *Odyssey*. We shall find that that poem too owes much to the *Gilgamesh* epic, but in ways that are intriguingly different from those that we have found in the *Iliad*.

⁵⁵ Some identify the same word in an Ugaritic fragment which refers to Baal deploying 'seven lightnings [...] eight *lšr* of thunder' (KTU 1. 101. 3 f.; CANE iii. 2053 f.), but others translate this as 'bundles'.

⁵⁶ J. D. Muhly, *Berytus* 19, 1970, 58 and 62.

8 The Odyssey

At the end of the last chapter I spoke of different strands in the fabric of the *Iliad*, and of the association of Near Eastern themes and motifs with particular ones among them. In the *Odyssey* the diversity of strands is more conspicuous. There is the so-called Telemachy, the story of Telemachus' journey to Pylos and Sparta, which serves largely to set Odysseus' return more clearly in the context of the other heroes' returns: there is the tale of Odysseus' wanderings, mainly presented in the form of a first-person narrative, there is the story of his homecoming and killing of the suitors; and over all, though rather intermittently, the divine machinery is in evidence. We shall find material for oriental comparisons in all of these, but above all in Odysseus' wanderings.

This strand in the poem, like Achilles' tragedy in the *Iliad*, shows an especially strong and clear relationship with the Gilgamesh epic. As in the previous chapter, we will take this major theme first, and then append a collection of more diverse notes on other Near Eastern motifs in the poem.

ODYSSEUS AND GILGAMESH

Odysseus himself is a hero of a very different cast from Achilles. He is phlegmatic, prudent, and resourceful; alert for traps, and better than others at foreseeing danger; he keeps his emotions under control, and while he has the physical strength and prowess to vanquish his opponents when the occasion demands, he prefers to overcome difficulties by the use of cunning. Such is his established character not only in the *Odyssey* but also in the *Iliad* and the Cycle. He is, then, no Gilgamesh. But in the course of his wanderings he does find himself in some very Gilgamesh-like settings. Once or twice we see him reacting in an impetuous, Gilgamesh-like fashion that is out of keeping with his normal temperament.

The man who saw everything

In the *Iliad* and the Trojan saga generally, Odysseus' role is that of a doughty warrior who is able to advance the Achaean cause at certain moments by his intelligent proposals and advice. He does not appear as

...who has travelled or will travel far and wide, or whose destiny is to experience extraordinary things in unfamiliar regions of the world. In the *Odyssey* he is transported into a story of a different order from that of traditional epic. Instead of fighting among and against other heroes at known cities, he becomes a largely solitary journeyer in distant lands, passing through a series of strange adventures that take him to the ends of the earth. There were older stories about the returns of other heroes from Troy, but they did not involve travel outside the known world. Odysseus was the one with the furthest to go to get home, and the poet who wanted to bring a tale of exotic wanderings into the Troy-centred epic repertory could most easily do so by attaching them to him. That is what the poet of the *Odyssey*, or one of his predecessors, has done. Of course the wanderings go well with the story of the homecoming and the regaining of the faithful wife. The longer Odysseus is away from home, the greater the pressure on Penelope to give him up for lost. But even if his return had not been delayed, he would have been away at the war for ten years, and this would have been a quite adequate basis on which to introduce the story of the faithful wife. It does not depend absolutely on his spending further years abroad. It is a story of different character from the wanderings and of independent origin.

In the opening lines of the epic there is no mention of the homecoming, of Penelope, or of her suitors. The focus is on Odysseus' wide travels and the experience that he gained in the course of them:

Tell me, Muse, of the man so versatile, who wandered
far and wide after he had sacked Troy's holy citadel
Many were the peoples whose cities he saw and whose mind he
came to know,
and many the woes he suffered in his heart at sea
as he ventured his life and his comrades' safe return.¹

Several scholars have been struck by the similarity of this to the beginning of the Gilgamesh epic in the Standard Babylonian version:

[Of him who] saw everything let [me te]ll the land,
[of him who] knew [the entirety] [let me tea]ch his whole story.
[the] la[nds] altogether.
[He was completed] in wisdom, he who kn[ew] the entirety;
he saw the [se]cret, and opened up what was concealed;
he brought back intelligence from before the Flood;

¹ *Od.* I. 1–5. Cf. II. 259, where Odysseus speaks of 'all that I suffered as I searched out the seaways' (πόρους ἅλως ἐξερεΐνων).

he travelled a distant path, weary and resigned.²

These lines form part of a prologue apparently added by Sin-leqe-unninni. Line 27 of his version corresponds to the first line of the Old Babylonian version, which may therefore have contained something similar to lines 38-40,

Trav[er]ser of the ocean, the broad sea, unto the rising of the sun,
insp[ec]tor of the world's quarters, constant seeker of (eternal) life,
who re[la]ched by his strength Ut-napishtim the distant.

It is Sin-leqe-unninni's version, however, that provides the closer parallel with the *Odyssey*, in three respects. Firstly, the relevant lines stand right at the beginning of the poem in that version; secondly, the emphasis is not just on the hero's wide travels, but on his acquisition of knowledge; and thirdly, his name is withheld until line 26, as in the *Odyssey* it is withheld until line 21, whereas in the Old Babylonian version (if that is faithfully represented by SBV I i 27 ff.) Gilgamesh was named in the seventh line, before the reference to his travels.

Gilgamesh was not the only man celebrated as a great traveller. Sargon of Akkad was famous for his far-flung conquests, and I have referred elsewhere to the Old Babylonian epic about him with its epilogue in which he listed the distant lands he had conquered and challenged his successors to rival him: 'the king who will equal me must make all the travels that I made'. In another Old Babylonian text he is made to say 'I am Sargon, Ishtar's beloved, roamer through the four quarters of the world'.³ The figure of the world traveller, then, was established at an early date in Babylonian tradition. But it is Gilgamesh, the wanderer in remote, mysterious lands where strange beings are to be encountered, who provides much the closer model for Odysseus.

Circe and Calypso

In the course of his wanderings Odysseus stays with two rather similar hostesses, Circe and Calypso. Each is called a goddess, but lives by herself (with maidservants) on a wooded island in a distant part of the world, seldom visited either by god or by man. Each is friendly, indeed amorous, and each helps Odysseus on his way after he has stayed with her for some time. Homeric scholars have often considered them to be in some sense doublets.

² *Gilg.* I i 1-7, compared by Wirth, 113 f.; Germain, 424 f.; Stella (1955), 145; and others.

³ Above, p. 70; A. T. Clay, *Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan* iv, New Haven 1923, II no. 4. 'Roamer through the four quarters of the world' is connected with the royal title 'king of the four quarters'; cf. below, n. 48.

In the light of the Gilgamesh epic they appear as doublets indeed, for they correspond in nature and function to the divine alewife Siduri whom Gilgamesh finds on the far side of Mt. Mashu and who helps him on his way.

Mt. Mashu, it will be recalled, is the immensely high mountain from which the sun comes forth into our sky. In Tablet IX of the standard version of the epic, Gilgamesh arrives at the mountain and persuades its guardians, a Scorpion-man and his wife, to let him enter the portal. He makes his way through the pitch-dark tunnel, twelve leagues in length, and emerges in a shining garden in which the trees and bushes all bloom with precious stones. As Tablet X begins, Gilgamesh is pacing about in this place, when he is spied by 'Siduri the alewife, who lives down by the sea'. Her name, which appears in the Hittite version as *Siduri*, seems to be identical with *šiduri*, the Hurrian word for 'maid'; it is preceded in the Akkadian text by the divine determinative, indicating that she is (like Circe and Calypso) classified as an immortal, despite being apparently bound to one other-worldly terrestrial location and exercising no powers elsewhere. She lives by herself in a house near the sea at the ends of the earth. Although she is described as an alewife, *sabitu*,⁴ and there is mention of her fermentation vats, it is not clear who ever comes to drink her beer.

On seeing the grim, worn-down figure of Gilgamesh, who is clad only in a lion-skin, Siduri concludes that he is a dangerous customer, perhaps an assassin, and she bolts her door against him. He demonstrates, threatening to break the door down, and then explains who he is and why he is now roaming the world in such a wretched state. He asks her for directions as to how he can cross the sea and reach Ut-napishtim. She tells him that it is very difficult: no one but the Sun-god has ever crossed that sea; the way is barred by the Waters of Death. However, in the adjacent forest he will find Ut-napishtim's boatman, Ur-shanabi, trimming a young pine. Perhaps Gilgamesh could travel with him to his desired destination.

Gilgamesh storms into the forest, armed with axe and sword, and instead of making polite overtures to the man upon whom he depends for

⁴ Cf. Dalley, 132: 'The profession "ale-wife", female seller of beer, is well known from its occurrence in several laws in the Code of Hammurabi and the Edicts of Ammu-saduqa which concern long-distance trade in the early second millennium BC. She seems to have lived outside the normal protection of male members of a family, and to have served beer, the staple drink of ancient Mesopotamia, to travellers. Her supplies were provided by the palace that sponsored her. An Akkadian list describes Siduri as "Ishtar of wisdom". The love-goddess has a connection with inns because they could also be brothels. The thirteenth-century Elamite king Untash-Napirisha dedicated a temple, a golden statue, and an inn to Ishtar's Elamite counterpart Pinengir (H. Koch, *CANE* iii, 1960).

his passage, he attacks him and smashes *šūt abni*, 'those of stone'. We do not know what these were—in the Hittite version they appear to be a pair of stone images—but they turn out to have been the essential means of propulsion for Ur-shanabi's boat. Gilgamesh then tells his story and asks for help in getting to Ut-napishtim. Ur-shanabi points out that he has just destroyed the means. He will have to take his axe to the forest, cut down three hundred trees, and make them into punt-poles, each thirty metres in length.

Gilgamesh does as instructed, brings the poles, and they embark. During the first stage of the voyage they are apparently carried forward by wind or current.

A journey of a new moon and the 15th; (then) on the third day []
Ur-shanabi reached the Waters [of Death].

That is, they travelled from the 1st of the month to the 15th, and reached the Waters of Death on the third day after that, in other words on the seventeenth (by inclusive reckoning) or the eighteenth day of the journey.⁵ The Waters of Death are apparently stirred by no wind or current, and here it becomes necessary to use the poles. The water itself is lethal, and to avoid contact with it each pole has to be discarded after use. The supply of poles runs out shortly before they reach Ut-napishtim's shore, but by some further device of uncertain nature Gilgamesh succeeds in bringing the boat in.

We also have, in the four columns of the Meissner tablet, some 114 lines from the corresponding part of the Old Babylonian version of the epic. In the first column Gilgamesh is in conversation with Shamash, the Sun-god, who advises him that his quest is fruitless. In the second and third columns he is having a similar dialogue with the alewife. She tells him that he will not find the eternal life that he seeks; he should concentrate on enjoying the pleasures of this life. He begs her to show him a way of crossing the sea. In the fourth column he is having his encounter with the boatman, who is here called Sur-sunabu.

Let us now recall the relevant details of Odysseus' adventures with Circe and Calypso.

He and his men reach Circe's island from the Laestrygonian city of Telepylos, 'Distant Portal',

where shepherd calls to shepherd
as he drives in his flock, and the other answers as he drives his cut.
There could an unsleeping man have earned double wages,

⁵ *Gilg.* X iii 49 f. The same time-formula occurs at IV i 4 f. in the journey towards Humbaba's Cedar Forest.

one as a cowherd, the other pasturing sheep,
for the paths of day and night are close together.⁶

The lines seem to reflect some rumour of conditions in the far north of Europe, where in the summer there is almost no night. This peculiarity of Telepylos has no bearing on the rest of the Laestrygonian episode, which, as Meuli showed, is one of several that have been taken over from the story of the Argonauts. We fail to see why these murderous giants could be located at Distant Portal where the paths of day and night are close together. But it is a striking coincidence that Odysseus approaches Circe's island at the station in his journeying immediately before he comes to Circe, while Gilgamesh approaches and passes through the gate of the Sun in Mt. Mashu to reach Siduri's shore.⁷ Circe's island is explicitly located 'where the house and dancing-places of Dawn are, and the risings of the Sun' (12. 3 f.), and Siduri's establishment is somewhere beyond the sunrise. In the Old Babylonian version, as we have seen, Gilgamesh actually meets the Sun-god in the alewife episode.

Circe's island is called Αἰαίη νῆσος, 'the Aiaian island' or 'the island Aiaia', and she herself is called 'Aiaian Circe'. The name is manifestly related to Aia, which appears in Mimnermus as the land of the Golden Fleece, 'where the swift Sun's rays are stored in a golden chamber', and to Aietes, 'Man of Aia', who is not only the king of that land but also Circe's brother; they are the children of the Sun and of the Oceanid Perse.⁸ The name Aia and its derivatives in this mythological complex evidently have an intimate connection with the Sun-god and with the place of his rising. It seems impossible to separate this from the name of the Babylonian goddess Aya, who is the Sun-god's wife and a goddess of the dawn, associated with sexual love.⁹ There was a Gate of Ishkur (and) Aya leading out of the underworld into the light,¹⁰ no doubt the opening through which the Morning Star and the light of dawn appeared. In the *Odyssey* it is from the Aiaian island that the hero sails to the land of the dead, and to it that he returns.

⁶ *Od.* 10. 82–6.

⁷ Germain, 415–17, 421. Germain's further attempt to equate the Laestrygonians with the Scorpion-couple of the Babylonian epic—he points out that *trygōn* can mean 'sting-ray'—is far-fetched.

⁸ *Mimn.* 11. 2, 11a; *Od.* 10. 135–9, cf. *Hes. Th.* 956 f.

⁹ Burkert (1979), 10. For Aya cf. Tallqvist (1938), 245 (associated with the sun's light); M. A. Powell in *Dumu-e, dub-ba-a, Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*, Philadelphia 1989, 447–55 (goddess of dawn). She is mentioned in an earlier episode of the Gilgamesh epic, III ii 20, where the hero's mother prays to Shamash before Gilgamesh sets out on the expedition against Humbaba: 'May Aya the bride keep you in mind (of him).'

¹⁰ CPLM no. 32 (*The Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*) rev. 19.

What of the name Circe, *Kirkē*? It is most obviously explained in a feminine form corresponding to *kirkos* 'hawk, falcon'. There does not seem to be anything bird-like about her as she appears in the *Odyssey*. But it may be recalled that in Egyptian iconography the Sun-god is represented as a falcon, or with a falcon's head, and this also appears under Egyptian influence in Phoenician art.¹¹ This suggests a possible basis for the association of the name Falcon with a goddess connected with the sun; and there is a further fact that lends colour to the idea. The Hebrew for 'falcon' is *'ayyāh* (feminine).¹² The word is not attested in Phoenician or Aramaic, but it may well have existed there; it would have had the form *'ayyal* or *'ayyā* respectively. If this is anything more than an uncanny coincidence, we may suppose that the name of the old solar goddess Aya came to be interpreted as 'falcon' by Aramaic-speakers who were familiar with the solar falcon in Egyptianizing art. *Kirkē* would then be a straightforward Greek translation of *Aya* understood in this way.¹³

Circe is not represented as an alewife, but she does dispense drinks to those who arrive at her house. However, they are drugged potions which enable her to turn the visitors into animals. She appears as a kind of Mistress of Animals; her home is surrounded by wolves and lions whom she has tamed with her drugs. In this she resembles Ishtar rather than Siduri. Ishtar was a 'mistress of wild animals' who yoked lions and leopards; and in his confrontation with her in Tablet VI, Gilgamesh recalls how she turned one of her lovers into a wolf and another into a frog(?).¹⁴

When Odysseus is offered one of Circe's drugged drinks, he takes it secure in the protection of the plant *moly* that Hermes has provided him with, and then rushes at her with drawn sword as if to kill her. If the poet had not told us that Hermes had instructed Odysseus to do precisely this, we might see the violent assault upon the hostess as a typically Gilgamesh-like piece of impetuosity. In any case we can put his threat to kill Circe beside Gilgamesh's threat to break down Siduri's door.

¹¹ There is an excellent example on the silver bowl from Praeneste, Villa Giulia 61574, made in Cyprus, or by an immigrant Phoenician Cypriot craftsman in Etruria, in the early seventh century. See the fine drawing in D. Harden, *The Phoenicians*, 179, or G. Markoe (as ch. 2, n. 110), 274.

¹² Brought into connection with Ayaia by Bérard, ii. 297. He also connects the name of Circe's mother Perse with Hebrew *péres*, which is another bird of prey, perhaps the bearded vulture.

¹³ Similarly Astour, 286.

¹⁴ Above, p. 56; *Gilg.* VI ii 26, iii 7. For the comparison of Circe with Ishtar cf. Wirth, 139; Ungnad, 136; Stella (1955), 143, 216 f.; Crane, 64. Siduri was considered a form of Ishtar (above, n. 4).

However, there is another passage of Babylonian poetry with which this episode of the *Odyssey* has a closer analogy. In *Nergal and Ereshkigal* Nergal goes down to the house of Ereshkigal in the underworld. She is planning to kill him as soon as he appears. But Ea has armed him with fourteen supernatural afflictions, which he deploys as he enters Ereshkigal's domain. Then he rushes at her, seizes her by the hair, and threatens to cut off her head. She pleads for her life, and immediately offers to be his wife. He accepts, and takes her in his arms. Circe's reaction to Odysseus' attack is closely similar. She supplicates for mercy, and proposes that they repair to her bed and make love. First he requires her to swear an oath that she will do him no harm, but once she has done so he happily accedes to her invitation.¹⁵

A hot bath, clean clothes, and a dinner are provided, but Odysseus sits moping. Circe asks why he is so downcast and will not eat or drink. He replies,

'Oh, Circe, why, what reasonable man
would bring himself to taste food or drink
until he had got his comrades freed and could see them before his
eyes?'

The Babylonian poet is in too much of a hurry to allow Gilgamesh any such hospitable attentions from Siduri. He does not get so much as a beer. But Siduri enquires the reason for his dejected state, and he answers with a rhetorical question similar to that with which Odysseus answers Circe.¹⁶

'How should my cheeks not be wasted, my face downcast,
my heart wretched, my aspect worn,
and grief in my insides? ...
My friend whom I love greatly, who underwent every hardship with
me,
Enkidu, whom I love greatly, who underwent every hardship with me—
the fate of mortals has overtaken him.'

Different though the circumstances are, Gilgamesh and Odysseus are both downcast on account of their comrades.

A major point of contact between Siduri and Circe is that they serve similar functions in their respective narratives. Each gives the hero, at his request, essential advice on how to continue his journey. Moreover, in each case this advice takes him to the *furthest point* of his journey, and

¹⁵ *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (Amarna version) 42 ff., cf. SBV vi; *Od.* 10. 321–35; Germain, 263 n. 4; D. L. Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey*, Cambridge Mass. 1972, 65; Crane, 71–5.

¹⁶ *Gilg.* X i 46 ff. (restored from parallel passages); *Od.* 10. 383–5.

to a man of outstanding wisdom whom he wishes or needs to consult. Gilgamesh is told how to cross the Waters of Death to find Ut-napishtim. Odysseus is told how to cross Ocean's stream to the House of Hades where he must consult Teiresias.¹⁷

It had been Gilgamesh's intention all along to reach Ut-napishtim. He asks Siduri,

'[Now,] alewife, which is the way to Ut-napish[ti]m?
[What are] the directions? Give them to me, give me the directions.
If it can be done, let me cross the sea;
if it cannot be done, let me roam the steppe.'

She replies:

'There has not, Gilgamesh, ever been a ferry,
and no one who has come since the beginning of time has crossed the
sea.'

(Then she goes on to explain how he *might* cross it.) As for Odysseus, he does not anticipate the destination that Circe prescribes for him. He asks her to send him home, but she tells him that he must first go on to Hades to consult Teiresias. His reaction to this corresponds to Siduri's answer to Gilgamesh:

'Oh, Circe, why, who will show me the way on that journey?
No one has ever reached Hades by ship.'¹⁸

Let us now turn to Calypso.¹⁹ Her name is formed from the root *kalyp-*, 'conceal, veil'; this might be understood in various ways, but it could express the idea of 'the veiled one'. I mention this because when Siduri is introduced in the Gilgamesh epic she is described as *kutumm kutumat*, 'veiled with a veil'.²⁰ The goddess Aya, who was mentioned above in connection with Circe, bears the epithet *kallātu*, 'the bride' (wife of the Sun), and brides too are veiled—an appropriate image for a goddess of the dawn. We may recall the proem of Parmenides' philosophical poem, where the Heliad maidens, as they leave the house of Night by 'the gates of the paths of Night and Day', push the veils back from their faces.²¹

¹⁷ The parallel was noted by Radermacher, 26.

¹⁸ *Gilg.* X ii 16–22; *Od.* 10. 480–502; compared by Germain, 355; Stella (1955), 224.

¹⁹ Already compared with Siduri by P. Jensen, *ZA* 16, 1902, 128; Ungnad, 136.

²⁰ Ungnad, 136; Stella (1955), 143, 'la dea velata ai confini del mare'.

²¹ DK 28 B 1. 9 f. Some Akkadian texts describe the Night as a veiled bride, *kallātu kutumtu* (AHw 519).

Calypso lives in a cave. It is surrounded by trees, vines, streams, and flowery meadows: a place of such outstanding beauty that even a god who came upon it would pause to admire it and be delighted by the sight, as Hermes in fact does when he comes to deliver Zeus' message. Early Greek poets do not commonly dwell on scenic beauty, and it is possible that this paradise description is not merely ornamental but an echo of Siduri's jewelled glades.²² Certainly when Calypso tells Odysseus to go out into the forest and cut down trees to make a raft or boat, there is no denying the parallel with Siduri's sending Gilgamesh into the forest to find Ur-shanabi, which leads to his having to cut down a large number of trees so that the two of them can cross the sea.²³

We saw that Gilgamesh's voyage from Siduri's shore to the Waters of Death takes seventeen or eighteen days. It is a remarkable coincidence that this is just the length of Odysseus' voyage from Calypso's island.

For seventeen days he sailed on across the sea,
and on the eighteenth appeared the shadowed mountains
of the Phaeacians' land at its nearest point to him.²⁴

Calypso had loved him and wanted to keep him. Gilgamesh's encounter with Siduri, on the other hand, is devoid of love interest. She is amiable enough towards him (once she has been reassured that he is not a hoodlum but a well-authenticated hero), but she shows no inclination to dalliance. The goddess who offers him love, at an earlier stage in the story, is Ishtar, and there is an echo of the Ishtar episode in Calypso's response to Hermes' message from Zeus that she must send Odysseus on his way. Complaining that the Olympians begrudge goddesses the love of mortal men, she recalls past instances in which a goddess has taken a mortal lover with fatal consequences for him, and she passes on from them to her own case: 'And so again now you gods begrudge me the companionship of a mortal man'. This has long been compared with the passage where Gilgamesh recites the list of Ishtar's lovers and their consistently unenviable ends. He too continues from

²² *Od.* 5. 63–75; Ungnad, 136; Stella (1955), 143. There is, however, another passage in the Gilgamesh epic that provides a closer parallel for the motif of a wonderful, remote forest which is admired by someone coming to it. When Gilgamesh and Enkidu arrive at Humbaba's forest, 'They stood at the edge of the forest, they gazed at the height of the cedars, they gazed at the entrance to the forest ... They saw the Cedar Mountain, dwelling-place of the gods, holy place of Irina, I in the heart of the mountain the cedar held up its greenery, I pleasant its shade, full of delight' (V i 1–8).

²³ *Od.* 5. 162 ff., 238 ff.; Ungnad, 136. Odysseus fells twenty trees, Gilgamesh three hundred.

²⁴ Above, p. 406; *Od.* 5. 278–80 (= 7. 267–9).

them to his own case: 'And no also, you will love me and then [treat me] like them.'²⁵

Calypso intended, indeed, to make Odysseus immortal and ageless like herself, so that he could be hers for ever. She had often told him so but he could not be persuaded.²⁶ Ishtar does not explicitly offer Gilgamesh immortality, and it would have been poetically awkward if she had, since immortality later becomes the thing he desires above all. But she does offer divine privileges: a chariot of gold and lapis lazuli drawn by storm-demons, residence in her wondrous house, the homage of kings, and so on. He rejects it all. In the analogous scene in the Ugaritic epic where the goddess 'Anat tries to wheedle Aqhat into giving her his bow, she does offer him immortality, but he is equally unresponsive.²⁷

In the larger context of the relationship of Odysseus' journeyings to those of Gilgamesh, it may be significant that he comes close to attaining eternal life and agelessness. Gilgamesh reaches the man who has eternal life, but cannot get it for himself; he is given the plant of rejuvenation but he loses it. Odysseus finds a goddess who could have made him immortal and unaging, but he himself declines them.

The Phaeacians

Odysseus' eighteen-day voyage from Calypso's isle brings him to Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians. In the sequence of his wanderings they may be said to occupy the same place as Ut-napishtim in those of Gilgamesh, in that Calypso, from whom he reaches them, is a Siduri figure, and from them he goes straight home. In themselves they do not have much in common with Ut-napishtim, except that they have been removed from the world of strife to a situation of blessed isolation far from mankind and close to the gods. Scheria is a sort of paradise where constant zephyrs blow and the fruit never rots or fails.²⁸ Gilgamesh motifs in fact continue to appear in the Phaeacian episodes.²⁹

When Odysseus first appears before Nausicaa and her maids, he presents a fearsome aspect, naked, salt caked, and sea-beaten; he is compared to a starving lion who comes through wind and rain with blazing eyes among a herd of cows or a flock of sheep. The maids take

²⁵ *Od.* 5. 118-29; *Gilg.* VI ii 7-iii 10; Fries, 385.

²⁶ *Od.* 5. 135 f., 208 f., 7. 256-8, 23. 335-7.

²⁷ *Gilg.* VI i 7-21; *KTU* 1. 17 vi 25-33 (cf. above, p. 362); Gordon (1952), 94, and (1955), 57; Considine, 89.

²⁸ *Od.* 5. 35, 6. 3-8, 7. 117 f., 201-6.

²⁹ Cf. Wirth 115-26; Ungnad, 136; Gresseth, 8.

might and flee. We may compare the initial impression that Gilgamesh makes on Siduri, causing her to lock herself in:

Gilgamesh was going this way and that, and [clothed in a (lion-)skin [He had divine flesh on [his body], (but) there was woe in [his heart]; [his] face [was like] (that of) one who has travelled far. The alewife surveyed him from a distance, she debated in her mind, she [spoke] a word, with her own self she [took counsel]: 'Perhaps this man is a mur[derer]: someone going into [].'³⁰

Nausicaa, however, stands her ground. She decides that Odysseus must be taken care of, and provides him with clean clothes, of which she happens conveniently to have a supply on hand. After he has bathed and attired himself, he appears transformed, godlike, and she is so impressed that she expresses to her maids the wish that he might care to settle in Scheria and marry her. She then brings him into town. There are parallels here with more than one part of the Gilgamesh epic. In Tablets I-II there is the story of how a naked, unkempt, powerful man—Enkidu—is met at a watering-place by a young woman who gives him clothes and brings him to the city. At the beginning of Tablet VI, after Gilgamesh returns from his long and taxing expedition to Humbaba's forest, he washes his hair, discards his dirty clothes and puts on clean ones, and assumes his royal sash and crown. Ishtar is captivated by the sight of him and at once proposes marriage. In Tablet XI the wash and brush-up theme recurs. Ut-napishtim observes that his visitor is entangled in filthy hair, and that the wearing of skins has ruined the beauty of his limbs. He tells his boatman to take him to a basin and make him wash his hair, throw his skins into the sea for the waves to carry off, and put on new clothes, which will remain clean and spotless until he gets home. We recall that on arriving at Scheria, before being rehoused by Nausicaa, Odysseus had thrown his last article of clothing into the sea—the shawl which the goddess Leucothea had lent him to keep him afloat. Later the Phaeacian queen gives him some new clothes to take home in a sealed box.³¹

Although Ut-napishtim has no city or people about him, he does present certain analogies with the Phaeacian king Alcinous. He has a

³⁰ *Od.* 6. 127-38; *Gilg.* X i 5-14; Wirth, 116-18.

³¹ *Gilg.* I iv-II ii, cf. OBV Pennsylvania fr., ii-v; VI i 1-9; XI 234-55; *Od.* 5. 458-62; 8. 438-

wife, with whom he benevolently discusses what is to be done with Gilgamesh; it is she who proposes sending him home in peace, and giving him a leaving-present. He has his boatman, whom he charges to take Gilgamesh back to Uruk. He does not have a daughter, at any rate in the Assyrian version of the poem; yet in Berossus' version of the Flood story, where he appears under the name of Xisouthros (after the Sumerian Ziusudra), he is said to have survived the cataclysm with his wife, his daughter, and his boatman, and all of them were together transported to live with the gods. It is conceivable, therefore, that the *Odyssey* was influenced by a version of the Gilgamesh story in which the napsistim had a daughter as well as a wife.³² However, the motif of the king's daughter who meets the visiting hero in private and guides him to her father or otherwise assists him is a recurrent one in folk-tale, and appears elsewhere in the *Odyssey* itself, in the story of Menelaos and Proteus and again in the Laestrygonian episode.

Odysseus' supremacy in the athletics arena leads Alcinoos to admit that the Phaeacians are no great boxers or wrestlers, though good runners and sailors. He adds:

αἰεὶ δ' ἡμῖν δαῖς τε φίλη κίθαρίς τε χοροί τε
εἵματα τ' ἐξημοιβὰ λοετρά τε θερμὰ καὶ εὐναί.

What we always like is feasting, the lyre, dances,
clean clothes, hot baths, and bed.

This manifesto strikingly recalls the values that the alewife recommends to Gilgamesh in the Old Babylonian version of the Akkadian epic, especially as the parallel items come in precisely the same order:

'But you, Gilgamesh, let your belly be full (δαῖς);
day and night keep on enjoying yourself.
Every day establish enjoyment:
day and night dance and sport (χοροί),
let your clothes be kept cleaned (εἵματα ἐξημοιβὰ),
let your head be washed, be you bathed in water (λοετρά).
Take care of the child who holds your hand;
let your wife keep on enjoying herself in your lap (εὐναί).'³³

To Alcinoos and his court Odysseus relates his adventures at length. Most of them are presented to us only in this first-person format. The account of Gilgamesh's stay with Ut-napishtim is also largely taken up

by an extended first-person narrative, the story of the Flood, though in this case the host is the narrator and the guest the auditor. The use of this technique on such a large scale in the *Odyssey* has often attracted attention. It is a bold device which allows the poet both to encapsulate the ten years of wanderings within a much more concentrated time-span, and to distance himself from the more fantastic tales. It has long been suspected, however, that the Gilgamesh epic may have provided a model.³⁴

Finally, there is what has been called the 'magic ship' motif. The Phoenicians need no steersmen, because their ships are intelligent. They do not have rudders, like other ships; they themselves know men's minds and the geography of the inhabited world, and they find their way swiftly, invisibly, and in perfect safety to their destinations, like cruise missiles. No such claims can be entered on behalf of Ur-shanabi's vessel, but it too is characterized by unique and mysterious equipment, the stone images (or whatever they were) which, in their owner's words, were 'those which take me across, so that I do not touch the Waters of Death'. If they were images, they presumably embodied divine powers and thus a principle of animation distantly comparable to the intelligences that guided the Phaeacian ships.³⁵

Further Gilgamesh motifs in the Apologoi

When Odysseus and his men are heading for home from the island of Acolus, with all the adverse winds bound up in a bag, he mans the steering-oar himself and keeps hold of it day and night without resting. By the tenth day they are in sight of Ithaca. But Odysseus cannot keep awake any longer. He falls asleep, his men undo the bag, the winds escape, and the ship is blown back. For Odysseus to achieve his desired goal, then, it was necessary for him to stay awake for a prolonged period (ten or eleven days), but he failed. This is reminiscent of the trial that Ut-napishtim lays upon Gilgamesh: in order to achieve eternal life, he must first stay awake for six days and seven nights. Gilgamesh fails—and not just by a little.³⁶

Odysseus' series of encounters with the dead in Book 11 have their counterpart not at any point of Gilgamesh's journeyings but in the supernumerary Tablet XII, where Enkidu's ghost is raised and makes conversation with Gilgamesh. As noted in the last chapter in connection

³² Berossus, *FGH Hist* 680 F 4 § 15 p. 380. 10 and 25, adduced by Gresseth, 8 f.

³³ *Od.* 8. 26–9; *Gilg.* Meissner fr. iii 6–13; cf. C. R. Beyce in H. D. Evjen (ed.), *Mnemai. Studies in Memory of K. K. Hulley*, Chico 1984, 17.

³⁴ Fries, 395; Burkert (1991), 170; (1992), 117.

³⁵ *Od.* 8. 557–63; *Gilg.* X ii 29, 41, iii 39, OBV Meissner fr. iv 21–4; Ungnad, 136; Gresseth, 10. That the ship which takes Odysseus home is turned to stone on its return journey (13. 163) can hardly be relevant.

³⁶ *Od.* 10. 28 ff.; *Gilg.* XI 199 ff.; Gresseth, 10.

with the visitation of Patroclus' ghost to Achilles, the Nekyia of the *Odyssey* has several features that connect with the Akkadian text and its Sumerian original, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World*. As he instructs Gilgamesh that he must make a hole in the earth for Enkidu's spirit to come up, so Circe instructs Odysseus to dig a trench, about which the ghosts will appear. As Gilgamesh embraces Enkidu's ghost and hears from him about the nature of death and the dissolution of the body, so Odysseus attempts to embrace his mother's ghost, and hears from her how the body is dissolved at death while the soul flies away. In describing the fates of the dead, Enkidu distinguishes various categories of person whom he has seen in the underworld, some of whom are represented in the *Odyssey*: the man killed in battle, the unburied man, the man who fell from a roof. These last two categories, which we know from the Sumerian text, are combined in the *Odyssey* narrative in the person of Elpenor.³⁷ We also hear of the man who had no respect for the word of his father and mother, and whose punishment recalls that of Tantalus: 'He drinks ... water, water by the scale, but does not get enough.'³⁸ Gilgamesh asks too about 'my father and my mother ... did you see them?' 'I saw them,' ['How do they fare?'] The fragment breaks off there, but clearly Gilgamesh learned about the fate of his parents in the underworld, as Odysseus learns about his mother's.³⁹

At the end of the Nekyia Odysseus finds the ghosts clustering about him in hordes, and he becomes afraid lest Persephone send the Gorgon's Head at him from Hades. That would evidently signify his incapacitation and capture. When Enkidu first goes down (alive) to the nether world in the hope of recovering Gilgamesh's lost *pukku* and *mekku*, Gilgamesh warns him:

'Do not be anointed with sweet jar-oil:
at its scent they will gather round you.
Do not hurl a throw-stick into the underworld:
those hit by the throw-stick will surround you.
Do not bear a staff in your hands:
the ghosts will flicker about you.'

Enkidu disregards these and the rest of his friend's injunctions, and the dead duly gather round him, surround him, flicker about him, and this presages his seizure by the underworld.⁴⁰

³⁷ See above, p. 165.

³⁸ *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World*, Ur version (U 16878) obv. 9 (Shaffer, 120).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, rev. 12 (Shaffer, 121).

⁴⁰ *Od.* 11. 632-5 (cf. 42 f.); *Gilg.* XII 16 ff. = *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World* 187 ff. (Shaffer, 108-10).

Odysseus' ship returns from Hades' shore, following the current of *anamon*, 'at first by means of rowing, and then a fair breeze bore it'. The implication is that there was no breeze near the land of the dead. Is there an echo here of the Waters of Death, where Ur-shanabi and Gilgamesh had to provide their own propulsion for their boat?⁴¹

The worst error made by Odysseus' men in the course of his wanderings was the slaughter of some of the Sun-god's cattle on the island of Thrinacia. It cost them their lives. Helios complained to Zeus and demanded that he punish the men, threatening otherwise to desert the sky and shine in the underworld for the dead. Zeus agreed to the demand, sent a storm, and wrecked the ship, drowning everyone except Odysseus. The episode has points in common with the killing of the Bull of Heaven by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.⁴² It is not just that the creatures killed are bovine and exempt from natural death (it must be admitted that they are not very alike in other respects). In both epics there is discussion among the gods about the punishment of the offenders. And in both cases the outcome is that the hero's companion or companions must die; after that point the hero must carry on alone. Further, Helios' threat against the king of the gods if he is not allowed to get revenge is similar to the one that Ishtar utters to Anu, not after the Bull of Heaven is killed but slightly earlier, when she is pleading to be allowed to send it against Uruk to punish Gilgamesh for his insolence:

'If y[ou do n]ot give [me the Bull of Heaven], ...
I shall se[t my face t]owards the regions below:
I shall bring up the dead, they will devour the living;
above the living the dead will multiply.'

Here as in the *Odyssey* passage the angry deity raises the frightful prospect of a reversal of the upper and lower worlds.⁴³

MISCELLANEA ORIENTALIA

The Telemachy

Following the proemium, the action of the poem is initiated by means that we have seen to have analogues in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic epic.

⁴¹ *Od.* 11. 640; D. Gray, *Seewesen (Archaeologia Homerica, i G)*, Göttingen 1974, 7. Cf. also the windless calm that surrounds the isle of the Sirens, 12. 168.

⁴² P. Jensen, *ZA* 16, 1902, 127; Stella (1955), 143.

⁴³ *Od.* 12. 374 ff.; *Gilg.* VI iii-VII i; Ungnad, 137; Gresseth, 14; cf. above, pp. 391 f., on *Il.* 20 61-6. For the motif of the threat made by a deity against the king of the gods if revenge against a mortal is disallowed cf. also *KTU* 1. 18 i (Gordon [1955], 58).

A prolonged unsatisfactory situation is depicted, namely Odysseus' detention with Calypso, and there is an assembly of the gods at which a complaint is made to Zeus. He agrees to help the hero, and sets action in train by sending a messenger with instructions for Calypso. For the oriental parallels see above, pp. 173 ('how to start things moving') and 190 (communication between divinities by messenger). Athena's appeal to Zeus, asking why he is unmoved by Odysseus' plight (l. 48-62), may further be compared with Zechariah 1. 12 f.:

And the Messenger of Yahweh spoke in turn and said, 'O Lord of Hosts, how long will you go on having no compassion on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah which you have cursed these seventy years?' And Yahweh answered the Messenger who spoke with me, pleasant words, comforting words.

l. 50-4. Calypso's island is located at 'the navel of the sea', and she is identified as a daughter of Atlas, 'who knows the deeps of the whole sea, and has in his personal keeping the tall pillars which surround (or keep apart) earth and heaven'. For the pillars of heaven and the concept of the cosmic navel see pp. 148-50, where it is noted that the unusual marine Atlas of this passage has been connected with the Hurro-Hittite myth of the giant Ubelluri. Cf. also pp. 295 f.

This association of Calypso with an Atlas at the centre of the world seems to be independent of the Siduri theme. It may be the echo of a tale in which the hero came to consult Atlas for directions and was assisted by Atlas' daughter.⁴⁴

l. 307 f. Athena, disguised as a mortal man, has given Telemachus much friendly admonition, and he acknowledges it: 'Sir, you have been speaking benevolently, like a father to his son.' An elegist (Thgn. 10-19) uses the same simile of his own advice to his addressee. Bogan (211) compared Prov. 3. 12, 'for whom Yahweh loves, he reproves, being well disposed like a father to a son'.

l. 319-23. Athena's departure in the form of a bird surprises Telemachus, and he suspects that this may have been some divinity. Similarly at 3. 371-85. See p. 184.

⁴⁴ Cf. M. Nagler, *Archaeological News* 6, 1977, 79: '... the story pattern seems to be a reflex of what modern scholarship has come to understand as the consultation myth, whereby the hero penetrates after many trials and often with the help of a female figure to a deeply guarded area of the mythic geography ...; there he confronts an august and uniquely competent figure, male or female, who reveals to him—something.' Nagler observes that the Atlas of this passage, the father of Calypso whose island is at the navel of the sea, is the axial figure *par excellence*. 'What Homer has partly rationalized as Odysseus's seducers in a pair of erotic interludes is not only the folkloric figure of the powerfully dangerous and as powerfully helpful female, but the more profound mythical figure of the goddess who dwells close to the axis of the phenomenal world, associated if not identical with the source of all life and knowledge.'

2. 46 f. Telemachus reminds the Ithacans that Odysseus used to be their king, and 'kind like a father'. Others use the same phrase about him at 2. 234 and 5. 12. More than a thousand years earlier Hammurabi presented himself as 'a lord who is as a father-beggetter to the people' (Laws, xlviii 21).

l. 321 f. Menelaus was blown out into a vast sea, 'from which not even the birds come back in the same year, for it is huge and awful'. The allusion is of course to those birds which fly south for the winter. At the same time we are reminded of the Babylonian map that shows a land beyond the Bitter River to which 'a winged bird cannot safely complete its journey' (above, p. 145).

4. 11-14. Menelaus has a son Megapenthes whom he fathered by a slave-woman; 'for to Helen the gods vouchsafed no further issue once she had borne her lovely daughter, Hermione'. Krenkel (37) compared the story of Abram, whose wife Sarai told him: 'Look here, Yahweh has blocked me from giving birth, so go in to my maid; perhaps I shall be restored from her'; the maid gives birth to Ishmael (Gen. 16. 1-16). Similarly Rachel, childless herself, gives Jacob her maid Bilhah; she bears him two sons, whom Rachel regards as her own (Gen. 30. 1 ff.). Again, when Jacob's other wife Leah realizes that she is not going to have any more children than the four sons she has had, she gives him her maid Zilpah, who bears him two more sons (30. 9-13). It was evidently a custom that when the principal wife was childless or had ceased childbearing, a man might take her maidservant as a surrogate wife to bear him (further) children. J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, New Haven 1975, 68-71, cites evidence for similar provisions in Mesopotamian documents, extending from an Old Assyrian marriage contract (ANET 543) and the Laws of Hammurabi (§ 146) to the seventh century. It may be added that the Ugaritic term for a concubine, *ššlmt*, 'she who completes', is taken to imply that she had the recognized role of completing the family by bearing children when the wife was barren (A. J. Rainey, *Or.* n.s. 34, 1965, 16).

4. 45. Telemachus and Pisistratus gaze in admiration at Menelaus' palace; it is filled with 'a radiance as of the sun or moon' due to the facings of gold, silver, electrum, bronze, and ivory (72 f.). So is Alcinoüs', where the materials mentioned are gold, silver, and bronze, with a frieze of lapis lazuli (7. 84-90). These descriptions must be inspired by oriental palaces, perhaps especially Assyrian ones such as that of Sargon at Khorsabad.⁴⁵ The comparisons with the radiance of sun or moon confirm this, as the Neo-Assyrian and later Babylonian kings

⁴⁵ Cf. H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments*, 429 n. 1. L. Gordon (1962), 275, refers also to Danel's palace, which is built with silver and gold, gems and lapis lazuli (KTU 1. 4 v 18 f. = 32-4).

were in the habit of using just such similes when they refurbished temples and other structures. See p. 251.

4. 83–9. Menelaus tells how he visited Cyprus and Phoenicia, the Egyptians, the Ethiopians, the Sidonians, the Eremboi,⁴⁶ 'and Libya where the lambs quickly grow horns; for three times a year the sheep give birth'. This idea of wondrous livestock in a distant land beyond the sea might perhaps recall again the Babylonian map, where in one of the islands beyond the Bitter River there are 'cattle equipped with horns [] they run fast and overtake [...]' (above, p. 145).

4. 353 Menelaus relates that the gods detained him in Egypt because he failed to sacrifice hecatombs to them, 'and they, the gods, always wanted (me) to keep (their) injunctions in mind'. This strapline was athetized by ancient scholars, who asked 'What injunctions?' None have been mentioned, and the whole idea of sacrifice being regulated by divine commandments is as abnormal in Greece as it is normal in the Old Testament. The phrase 'to remember all Yahweh's commandments' occurs at Num. 15. 39 (Bogan, 253).

4. 481. αὐτὰρ ἐμοί γε κατεκλάσθη φῖλον ἦτορ, 'and my heart was broken'. This expression occurs seven times in the *Odyssey*, and because we have a similar idiom in English it is easy to overlook the fact that it is not a normal Greek one. On the other hand, it is quite common in Hebrew: Jer. 23. 9 *nišbar libbî b'qirbî* 'my heart is broken within me', cf. Ps. 34. 19(18), 51. 19(17), 69. 21(20), Isa. 61. 1, Ezek. 6. 9 (Bogan, 251).

4. 561–9. Menelaus' transportation to a paradise at the ends of the earth parallels that of Ziusudra/Ut-napishtim; see pp. 166 f. The mention of Rhadamanthys as another resident in the same place (564) is of interest, as he is referred to later as having travelled on a Phaeacian ship when he went to visit Tityus. We have seen that the Phaeacian mariners have something in common with Ut-napishtim's boatman, and their king with Ut-napishtim himself. There is also an analogy between Rhadamanthys and Gilgamesh, in that both came to be considered judges in the underworld.⁴⁷ These are perhaps the fragmented relics of some tale about Rhadamanthys influenced by the Mesopotamian myths.

⁴⁶ W. von Soden, *Wiener Studien* 72, 1959 26–9, suggests that the 'Sidonians' are Phoenician colonists in the western Mediterranean, who did in fact call themselves by this name, and that the unexplained name 'Eremboi' is derived from West Semitic *'ereb* 'west' and denotes the natives of the lands west of Libya. This restores geographical order up to the final item, and it is possible to consider it favourably without having to subscribe to von Soden's wild notion that Menelaus is supposed to have circumnavigated Africa clockwise. (Crates made him do so anticlockwise, Strab. 1. 2. 31.) Brown, 80, identifies the Eremboi with Heb. *'arammî* 'Aramaeans'.

⁴⁷ Cf. p. 65. The two were compared by H. Schneider, *LSS* 5(1), 1909, 83 = Oberhuber, 72.

4. 590. Menelaus promises to give Telemachus three horses and a chariot. Gordon (1952, 94) compared the Keret epic (*KTU* 1. 14 iii 24, iv, v 37 f., vi 6 f., 20), where the gifts offered by the king of Udm to Keret include 'three horses (and) a chariot' (or chariots; the Ugaritic for 'chariot', *mrkbt*, is plural in form).

4. 759–67. Penelope has learned that Telemachus has gone abroad without consulting her and that the suitors are planning to intercept him and kill him. On Euryclea's suggestion, she bathes, puts on clean clothes, goes upstairs with her maids, puts barley grains in a basket, and prays to Athena for her son's safety, concluding with an *ololygmos*, the ceremonial ululation used by women. Burkert (1992, 99 f.) points out that the barley and the ululation imply a sacrifice, though it is an extraordinary place for one in Greek terms. 'Ceremonial prayer in the women's upper story is otherwise unheard of in Greece.' He suggests that the passage is influenced by *Gilg.* III ii 1–21, where Gilgamesh's goddess mother prays for his safe return from the expedition on which he is determined to go:

[Ninsun] entered [her chamber;]
[] soap-plant;
[she put on a ...] to adorn her body,
[she put on fibulae(?)] to adorn her breast;
[] she was wearing her crown;
[] the ground (and) the dust.
[] she went up on the roof,
went up b[efore] Shamash, made a smoke-offering,
made a *surqinnu*-offering b[efore] Shamash, raised her arms.

The *surqinnu*-offering is one in which meal is poured out. The parallel with the *Odyssey* consists not just in the upstairs ritual activity but in the narrative situation of a mother praying for her son's safe return from a dangerous journey.

4. 787 f. After making her prayer, Penelope lies in her chamber, taking no food or drink. This motif, as a means of portraying a character's deep distress, had long been known to Near Eastern literature. So in the Sumerian poem *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* 390 f. (Jacobsen, 305),

After thus he had been telling him,
he went into the back of his bedroom and lay there refusing food.

Enlil behaves likewise in *The Cursing of Akkadê* 209 (Jacobsen, 371); so does Ahab at 1 Ki. 21. 4, 'and Ahab went into his house ... and he lay on his bed and turned his face away, and ate no food'.

The Wanderings

5. 70 f. Through Calypso's paradise run four streams of pure water; the springs are close together, but the streams flow in four different directions. This unusual arrangement has long been compared with the river which flowed out of Eden and divided into four streams that ran through different lands (Gen. 2. 10–14; C. Fries, *NJb* 9, 1902, 690 f.). Two of these are identified as the Tigris and Euphrates; the names and topographical indications provided for the other two remain obscure, but in any case a Mesopotamian mythical scheme seems to underlie the passage, with a typical division of the world into four quadrants.⁴⁸ The first river, Pishon, marks off a land of gold, rubies(?), and carnelian(?). Some take this to be Arabia, but it may originally have been a mythical place similar to Siduri's garden of jewels. For the idea of precious stones of every sort in Eden cf. Ezek. 28. 13–16.

5. 196–9. Calypso serves Odysseus with 'every food to eat and drink, of the sort mortal men consume', while she herself is served by her maids with ambrosia and nectar. The careful dietary distinction underlines the fact that Odysseus stands on the brink of immortality but remains on the mortal side (cf. above, p. 412). Crane (174) compares the story of Adapa, where the gods offer the hero the bread and water of life, which would have made him immortal, but he declines them under a misapprehension, and also *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (SBV ii 41' ff.), where Nergal is warned against tasting the food or drink of the underworld when he goes there.

5. 282–90. Poseidon, seeing Odysseus safely sailing the sea, is angry, and (correctly) blames the other gods for acting behind his back. Wirth (135) compared this with the anger of Enlil in the Babylonian Flood myth:

As soon as Enlil arrived,
he saw the boat, and Enlil was furious;
he filled with rage at the Igigi gods:
'Someone has emerged alive!
No man should have survived the catastrophe!'

(*Gilg.* XI 170–3.) He also compared the description of the storm which Poseidon proceeds to create (291–6) with the one that accompanies the Flood (*Gilg.* XI 96 ff.; Wirth, 130 f., cf. Stella (1955), 144). But the references to clouds, winds, and darkness are not specific enough to establish a significant connection.

⁴⁸ *Kibrāt erbetti*, 'the borders of the four', is a common Akkadian expression for the whole of Mesopotamia or of the world.

5. 328–30, 368–70. In the first passage the winds blow Odysseus' raft this way and that like Boreas in autumn carrying thistle-clusters over the field, in the second, as the raft breaks up, the wave scatters its timbers like a wind dispersing a heap of dry chaff. Bogan (260) compared biblical passages which speak of the wicked being dispelled like chaff before the wind: Ps. 1. 4, 35. 5, 83. 14(13), Hos. 13. 3, Isa. 17. 13, Job 1. 18. More recently Puhvel (26 f.) has adduced a Hittite purification text, *KUB* xli. 8 ii 15–19: 'as the wind sweeps chaff and carries it over the sea, let it likewise sweep the blood-defilement of this house and carry it over the sea.' He assumes that the simile originated in this ritual-magical context and was taken over and 'secularized' in epic tradition for narrative effect.

There is another wind and chaff simile at *Il.* 5. 499–502, but with a different point: the dust raised by the horses' hooves whitens the Achaeans, as the heaps of chaff grow white during the winnowing.

6. 160–9. Odysseus tells Nausicaa that he is as struck by her appearance as he was by that of a young palm growing by the altar of Apollo on Delos. Krenkel (37) compared Cant. 7. 8(7), 'this tallness of yours is like to a date-palm, and your breasts to the clusters'. He also observed that *Tāmār* 'Date-palm' appears as the name of three different women in the Old Testament.

6. 232–4. The poet uses the simile of a goldsmith who has been taught his skills by Hephaestus and Athena. For the idea of such a craftsman being divinely inspired cf. Exod. 31. 1–5, where Yahweh tells Moses that he has appointed Bšal-ʾEl with certain others to make the Ark of the Covenant and all the other sacred paraphernalia, 'and I have filled him with the spirit of God, with wisdom and aptitude and knowledge and all craftsmanship, to design designs, to make things in gold and in silver and in bronze', etc. (Krenkel, 37).

6. 300. 'Even a child could show you the way.' Bogan (262) compared Isa. 10. 19, 'and the remnant of the trees of his forest will be numbered (i.e. few), and a child will (be able to) register them'.

7. 91–4. On either side of the entrance to Alcinoos' palace are dogs of gold and silver, immortal and unaging, cleverly made by Hephaestus to keep guard. C. Faraone (*GRBS* 28, 1987, 257–80; *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, New York & Oxford 1992, 18–35) points out that there are several other myths of magical guardian figures made by Hephaestus, and he shows that they are to be related to practices widespread in the Near East, from Anatolia to Assyria. Rituals designed to protect thresholds and doorways from the approach of evil are particularly well documented between the ninth and the sixth century. Neo-Assyrian building inscriptions attest the stationing of metal guardian statues,

sometimes of animals, on each side of entrances, or buried under them. Dogs are mentioned under Sennacherib and Assurbanipal. Nebuchadnezzar had pairs of canine figures buried under the threshold. Already under the Hittite empire, in a ritual text concerning the protection of the palace from evil, we read:

They make a little dog of tallow and place it under the threshold of the house and say 'You are the little dog of the table of the royal pair. Just as by day you do not allow other men into the courtyard, so do not let in the Evil Thing during the night.'

(KBo iv. 2 i 23-6 [CTH 398], trs. Gurney [1952], 163.)

8. 564-71. Alcinoos tells Odysseus of the prophecy that one day, after the Phaeacians have escorted someone home, their community will be covered over by a great mountain and never seen again. At 13. 125-87, after they have seen Odysseus back to Ithaca, this appears to be about to happen. Gordon (1962), 110 f., 232, draws attention to a parallel in the Middle Egyptian tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor.⁴⁹ The story, like most of Odysseus' adventures, is related in the first person. The narrator tells how he was sailing on the Red Sea in a large ship with a crew of 120. A storm arose, the ship was wrecked, and he was the only survivor. He was cast up on an island, which turned out to be occupied by an enormous serpent, thirty cubits long and of terrifying aspect. It proved, however, to be perfectly friendly and conversational. It told him that after four months he would be rescued by a passing ship, and in another two months he would reach home. But he would never see the island again, for after he left, it would become water.

8. 585 f. 'A prudent friend is as good as a brother.' Hesiod, *Op.* 707, advises against treating a friend as equal to a brother; cf. also Thgn 97-9. Bogan (270) compared Prov. 18. 24, 'there are friends for being friends with(?), and there is a loving one who is closer than a brother'.

9. 106 ff. The Cyclopes. The outwitting of a one-eyed giant is a widespread folk-tale for which I know no evidence from the ancient Near East. There are, however, depictions of figures with one eye centrally placed in the forehead on certain Sumerian seals of the third millennium (Mary Knox, *JHS* 99, 1979, 164 f.). A remarkable terracotta plaque of the early second millennium from Khafaje on the Diyala shows a god killing a one-eyed monster whose head is surrounded by pointed rays like the sun (A. Green, *CANE* iii. 1852 with fig. 7).

The Cyclopes (or at any rate Polyphemus), like the Laestrygonians of Book 10, are represented as cannibals liable to kill and devour visitors. We have one piece of a Hittite story about a city inhabited by cannibals: 'Any man that d[ies] among them (?or: comes to them), they are accustomed to eat. If they see a fat man, they kill him (and) eat him up' (Atto iii. 60 = CTH 17; H. G. Güterbock, *ZA* 44, 1938, 104 f.).

9. 553. Odysseus sacrifices Polyphemus' ram to Zeus and burns the thighbones, 'but he (Zeus) had no regard for the sacrifice'. In Near Eastern theology, too, the act of sacrifice does not put a god under compulsion, and he may spurn it. Bogan (274) cited Gen. 4. 4 f., 'and Yahuweh looked (with favour) upon Abel and his offering, but Cain and his offering he did not look upon'. In Mesopotamian prayers the suppliant asks the god to accept the offering, implying that acceptance is not automatic.

10. 286-306. Odysseus goes to Circe's house protected from harm by the plant *moly* which Hermes gives him. When Gilgamesh and Enkidu go against Humbaba there is a reference to their use of plants as protection. Gilgamesh says to his friend (*Gilg.* IV vi 20-4),

[Why,] my friend, do we [talk] like weaklings? . . .
My [friend], expert in combat, who has [] battle,
you have rubbed yourself with herbs, you will not fear [death].'

When Marduk goes to fight Tiamat (*En. el.* IV 61 f.),

In his lips he held a spell,
the herb(s) for extinguishing venom he grasped in his hand.

Herbal salves play an important role in Babylonian apotropaic rituals.

Circe will attempt to turn Odysseus into a pig by striking him with her wand, as she has done to his comrades. For the transforming touch of the deity see pp. 182 f.

10. 571-4. Circe goes down to the ship and tethers there the ram and the sheep that Odysseus will need, easily avoiding his seeing her: 'Who could see a god going this way or that, when he does not wish to be seen?' Bogan (398) compared Job 9. 11, 'Behold, he passes me by, and I do not see; he passes on, and I do not perceive him.'

11. 14-19. Odysseus' party sails all day along Ocean's stream, and at sunset reaches its furthest limit, where the Kimmerioi live, people shrouded in cloud and darkness, who never see the sun but endure a baneful, permanent night. It is not clear whether the poet associated this folk with the historical Cimmerians who terrorized Asia Minor in the seventh century. At any rate what is described here is a mythical location, the antithesis of the Laestrygonian Telepylos where there is no

⁴⁹ Lichtheim, i. 211-15, already compared with the Phaeacian episode, but without comment on this detail, by Radermacher, 38 ff.

night (A. Heubeck ad loc.). We may cite once again the Babylonian map (above, p. 145), on which one of the regions beyond the Bitter River bears the caption 'where the sun is not seen'.

Besides other variant readings canvassed in antiquity, we are told that some made the name Kemmerioi, supporting this by reference to a word *kemmeros* (otherwise unattested) meaning 'gloom' or 'darkness' (ἀχλὺς, ομίχλη). Bérard (ii. 319) drew attention to the Hebrew word *kimrîr*, 'blackness', found only at Job 3. 5 in the phrase *kimrîrê yôm* 'blackness of day'. However, the text is suspect (cf. L. L. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job: A Study in Methodology* (Missoula 1977, 29–31), and the supposed word may be non-existent.

11. 23 ff. Odysseus' primary purpose in visiting Hades is to consult the soul of the seer Teiresias, who will give him valuable advice. It is then, basically an exercise in necromancy, a form of divination practised in various parts of the Near East (above, p. 50). However, the procedures followed by Odysseus, in accordance with Circe's instructions in 10. 516–40, show a particular similarity to certain Hittite purification rituals, apparently of Hurrian origin, in which not the dead but certain deities of the lower world are summoned up. The procedures prescribed in *KUB* vii. 41 and duplicates (*CTH* 446, ed. H. Otten, *ZA* 54, 1961, 114–57; cf. Tropper, 111) are of especial relevance (G. Steiner, *U* 3, 1971, 265–83; Puhvel, 25).

As Odysseus performs his ritual on the shore of Oceanus (at a place where the rivers Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus run into the Acheron, 10. 513–15), so the Hittite performs his on the bank of a river. He digs a sacrificial pit with a spade (i obv. 6); but in a later passage this is done with a sword (cf. *it*, iii rev. 13). He sacrifices a lamb into the pit, allowing the blood to run down; in another text (*KUB* vii. 53 + xii. 58, i = *CTH* 409) a black sheep is specified. Then he pours oil, beer, wine and the beverages *walhi* and *marnuwan* into the pit, followed by groats and bran mash. He calls upon the Sun-goddess of the Earth to open the gate and let the Former Gods come up, including the seer Aduntarri and the (female) dream-interpreter Zulki; they will partake of the offerings.

Odysseus digs a pit with his sword (24). Into it he pours diluted honey, wine, and water, and sprinkles barley-meal over them. At this point he prays to the dead. Then he sacrifices the ram and black ewe that Circe has provided him with, letting their blood into the pit. The dead quickly gather round the pit. He then tells his men to flay and burn the victims and to pray to Hades and Persephone. The sequence of actions differs somewhat from that in the Hittite text; one may feel that the prayer to Hades and Persephone would have stood more logically before

the arrival of the ghosts, as a prayer for them to be allowed out, corresponding to the Hittite's prayer to the Sun-goddess of the Earth.

At the end of the conversation with Teiresias, the seer tells Odysseus, 'whichever of the dead you allow to get to the blood, he will speak the truth to you' (147 f.). We find similar promises in Babylonian necromancy texts of the first millennium; for example, 'You will call upon (him); and he will answer you.' 'You will view the ghost; [he will speak] with you; you will look (on him), and he [will converse] with you.' 'Whatever you ask him, he will tell you.' (Tropper, 86, 89, 91, 114)

11. 207. When Odysseus tries to embrace his mother, 'something like a shadow or a dream' flits out of his arms. She explains to him in 222 that when someone dies, the soul flies off from the body 'like a dream'. Mimnermus (S. 4) writes that man's youth is short-lived, like a dream. The simile is used of the wicked in Job 20. 8 (Bogan, 156): 'Like a dream he will fly away, and they will not find him; he will be put to flight like a nocturnal vision.'

11. 307–20. The story of the Aloadai, Otus and Ephialtes, recalls that of Ullikummi; see p. 121.

11. 556. Odysseus tells Ajax that he was a great 'tower' or 'fortification' for the Achaeans, τοῖος γὰρ σφιν πύργος ἀπώλεο. The metaphor is found also at Callin. 1. 20, Thgn. 233, Alc. 112. 10. Bogan (281) compared Ps. 61. 4(3), 'for thou art a refuge for me, a strong tower in the face of the enemy.'

11. 563. Ajax goes away without speaking. The Babylonian necromancy texts provide for the possibility that a ghost from whom an oracular response is sought may remain silent; a further ritual must then be performed (Tropper, 95, 97). However, it may be that we should classify Ajax's silence with those instances in ordinary dialogue when a speech is not answered (above, pp. 197 f.).

11. 605. For the bird-like noises made by the ghosts (cf. 43, 633, 24. 9, *Il.* 23. 101) see p. 163.

12. 23–5. Welcoming the party back from Hades, Circe says

'But come, eat food and drink wine
till the day's end again; and tomorrow at dawn
you shall sail, and I'll mark out your way.'

Bogan (282) compared Jdg. 19. 9, where the unnamed Levite's father-in-law says to him, 'Look, the day is declining. Stay here and let your heart be happy. Then you can get up early tomorrow for your journey and go to your tent.' Similarly Samuel to Saul at 1 Sam. 9. 19, 'Go up before

me to the altar platform; you shall eat with me today, and I will send you off in the morning and tell you everything that is on your mind.'

12. 39 ff. The Sirens. The name 'Siren' (Σειρήν, in Alcman Σηρηά on vases Σιρηά) cannot be plausibly explained from Greek. It may be worth recalling (since it is, predictably, not mentioned in the standard etymological dictionaries) that Lewy, 205, derived it from *šr hēn* which—though not actually attested—would be the perfect Hebrew equivalent to the Greek phrase χαρίεσσα ᾠοδῆ, 'attractive song', its literal meaning is 'song of charm'.

12. 85, 104. Scylla and Charybdis too have names which can be explained from Semitic. 'Scylla' suggested to a Greek ear the word *skylax* 'puppy', and this has prompted the poet of the *Odyssey* to say in line 86 that her voice is as loud as that of a young puppy; a bathetic advertisement of the monster. For a West Semitic interpretation see p. 59, n. 248.

As for Charybdis ('nom mythique sans étymologie'—Chantraine) she has been derived from a Hebrew *hōr 'ōbēd* 'cavity of perdition' 'vanishing-hole', or the equivalent in a related language (Bochart; Lewy, 207; Bérard, ii. 363). As with *šr hēn*, the phrase is not attested, yet it seems a possible one, and it would yield a highly appropriate sense.

12. 341 f. 'All forms of death are abhorrent to wretched mankind but to die of hunger is the most lamentable way.' Bogan (283) compared Lam. 4. 9, 'happier were those pierced by the sword than those pierced by hunger, who ebbd away transfixed without produce of the field'.

The Homecoming

14. 325. A quantity of wealth is described which would support someone 'even to the tenth generation'. The same large time-unit is used in Deut. 23. 3(2) f., where the prohibitions on bastards, Ammonites, or Moabites entering the assembly of Yahweh obtain 'even to the tenth generation' (Bogan, 288).

14. 357. The disguised Odysseus, spinning his yarn to Eumaeus, tells how he escaped from his Thesprotian captors' ship. They searched for him, but 'the gods themselves easily concealed me'. Bogan (401) compared Jer. 36. 26, where Jehoiakim sends his agents to arrest the prophet and his scribe Baruch, 'but Yahweh hid them'.

16. 35. On the motif of cobwebs as a sign of disuse see p. 543 on Bacchyl. fr. 4. 69.

16. 162 f. Athena enters, revealing herself to Odysseus while remaining invisible to Telemachus. Eumaeus' dogs can see her, and they react by retreating to the far side of the room and whimpering. This idea that animals may perceive and shy away from a supernatural being that is

invisible to a human recalls the story of Balaam's ass, which we have had occasion to cite more than once in other connections (Num. 22. 21 ff.; Krenkel, 17).⁵⁰

16. 400–5. Amphinomus counsels against Antinous' proposal to make another attempt on Telemachus' life: δεινὸν δὲ γένος βασιλῆϊόν ἐστι κτελεῖν, 'it is a fearful thing to kill one of royal stock'. He suggests first consulting the gods on the matter to see whether they approve. The implication is that a royal line is or may be under divine protection. The biblical episode where David and Abishai steal into Saul's camp at night has long been compared (Bogan, 405). They find Saul sleeping, and Abishai proposes killing him on the spot, but David replies, 'Do not destroy him; for who shall put forth his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be exempt (from guilt)?' (1 Sam. 26. 9).

16. 422 f. Penelope too reproves Antinous for planning to murder Telemachus, and for having no regard for suppliants, who after all have Zeus as their witness. Cf. Mal. 3. 5 (Bogan, 296), "And I will approach you to give judgment, and I shall be a prompt witness against the oppressors and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who exploit the hired labourer, the widow and the orphan, those who push aside the alien and do not fear me," says the Lord of Hosts.' As a witness against the oppressors, Yahweh is by the same token a witness for the oppressed.

17. 103 (= 19. 596). Penelope describes her bed as being constantly wet with her tears. The parallel of Ps. 6. 7(6) has long been adduced (Bogan, 265, 297, 306; Krenkel, 42): 'I am weary with my groaning, every night I flood my bed, with my weeping I turn my couch to water.' The motif is now attested also from Ugarit. Keret goes weeping into his chamber, and 'his tears poured forth like shekel-weights on the ground; the covering of his bed was moist' (KTU 1. 14 i 28–30;⁵¹ Gordon, [1952], 94). He proceeds to cry himself to sleep, as Penelope does repeatedly (1. 163 f. = 16. 450 f. = 19. 603 f. = 21. 357 f.).

17. 375–9. Antinous rebukes Eumaeus:

'Egregious swineherd, now why have you brought this fellow to town? Have we not got enough other vagrants, nuisance beggars to ruin our dinners? Is it that you resent them gathering here and eating up your master's livelihood, so you've invited this fellow to join in?'

⁵⁰ At school I had a headmaster who assured us in all seriousness that there must be a spiritual world beside the material, because one sometimes sees cats rubbing themselves against the legs of an invisible person.

⁵¹ Reading *anḫmst* with Virolleaud and others; see Caquot-Sznycer, 507 note 1.

Akish, the king of Gath, expresses himself very similarly when David feigns madness before him. He says to his servants, 'Look, you can see the man is raving: why have you brought him to me? Am I short of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to rave at me? Shall this fellow come into my house?' (1 Sam. 21. 15(14) f.; Gordon [1955], 37)

18. 86. Antinous threatens to send Irus to the cruel king Echetus on the mainland, who will cut off his nose and ears and tear out his genitals to feed his dogs. At 22. 475 f. these barbarities are actually inflicted on Melanthius. Laomedon threatened to cut off the ears of Poseidon and Apollo (Il. 21. 455). The amputation or mutilation of the nose and ears was a common punishment under the oriental monarchies, cf. *RIMA* 2. 201, 220 f., 266 (Assurnasirpal II); Hdt. 2. 162. 5 (with A. B. Lloyd's note), 3. 118. 2, 154. 2, 9. 112; Ezek. 23. 25 (Bogan, 301); Darius Behistun inscription, DB ii 74 (R. G. Kent, *Old Persian*, 124); Nylander, *AJA* 84, 1980, 329-33; Hall, 26, 158 f.

18. 196. Athena makes Persephone 'whiter than sawn ivory'. For the comparison of a woman's skin to ivory cf. Cant. 7. 5(4) (Bogan, 302), 'your neck is like a tower of ivory'.

18. 228 f. Telemachus assures his mother that he is old enough to know the difference between good and evil:

But I am intelligent and I know what is what,
the good and the bad; before, I was still a child.

Bogan (303) compared Isa. 7. 15 f.: (the child called Immanuel) 'shall eat yoghurt and honey when he knows how to reject the evil and prefer the good. For before the child knows how to reject the evil and prefer the good, that soil will be abandoned whose two kings you abhor.'

19. 33-43. As Telemachus and Odysseus go to the store-room, Athena, unseen, carries a golden lamp before them to give illumination. Telemachus is amazed to see the rooms glowing as if lit by a fire, and suspects that there is a deity about. His father tells him to be quiet and not ask questions: this is the way of the Olympians. What seems to underlie the passage, although the poet has partly rationalized it by putting a lamp in the goddess's hands, is the concept of the brilliant radiance that surrounds a divinity and on occasion fills the house that he or she enters; cf. p. 113.

19. 56 f. Penelope's lounge is worked with ivory and silver and was made by a named craftsman, Ikmalios. To a Greek ear the name might suggest 'moisture' (*ikmas*), but the notion of L. Lacroix (cited by J. Russo ad loc.) that this might be a suitable name for a craftsman because one sort of *ikmas* might serve as glue is unconvincing. So is Stanford's connection with Cypriot *ikmaō*, 'wound', even if this is related to Latin

'beat, strike'. The suggestion of Germain (445) that the name is Akk. *Yiqma-⁵² II, 'El has bound (me)', might seem more plausible, even the Phoenicians' reputation in Homer for fine craftsmanship (Il. 6. 23. 743, Od. 4. 615-18, 15. 415 f./460). Unfortunately the assumed 'Hebrew' verb *qm* occurs only in post-biblical Hebrew, and as far as I can see it is not attested for Phoenician.⁵³ Certainly the structure postulated, parallel to Yišma-⁵⁴ Ē (Ishmael) 'El has heard', is acceptable. If there is anything in the suggestion, the inference would be not that the poet of the *Odyssey* was adept at coining Phoenician names, but that he has used the name of an actual Phoenician craftsman whom he knew personally or by reputation.

19. 109-14. The justice and righteousness of the king promotes the fertility of the crops and livestock and the prosperity of his people. On this idea see pp. 136 f.

19. 163. Penelope asks the still disguised Odysseus about his origins, 'for you are not from the oak or rock of ancient story'. There are other passages (especially Il. 22. 126 and Hes. *Th.* 35) where oak and rock are coupled in proverbial-sounding expressions that perplex the modern commentator. As for birth from tree or rock, there are certainly Greek myths about men being born from trees, and in the myth of Deucalion they are born from thrown stones.⁵⁵ But for the two together the best parallel is provided by Jer. 2. 27. He speaks of the shameful kings, priests, and prophets who, turning their back on the true God, 'say to a tree "You are my father", and to a stone "You gave birth to me"'. There is no doubt about the nature of the tree and stone in question here: they are the objects of Canaanite pagan worship (cf. Deut. 29. 16, Ezek. 20. 32, Hab. 2. 19), identified as divinities from whom certain of the nobility claimed descent. Cf. pp. 34 f.; also Jer. 3. 9.

See further West (1966), 167-9 (where the Ugaritic passage quoted after Dirlmeier, 25, is *KTU* 1. 3 iii 20-5 = iv 13 ff.); Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God*, 84 f.

The archery contest

19. 570-81. Penelope reveals her intention of setting a contest for her hand. It will involve stringing Odysseus' bow and shooting through a line of twelve iron axes, as he used to do. This is later announced and attempted at the suitors' feast (21. 1-4, 73 ff.). It turns out that no one is strong enough to string the bow except Odysseus himself.

⁵² Akk. *kamū* 'bind' may be comparable.

⁵³ I cannot resist relating the apocryphal myth supposed to illustrate the Westphalian character. It is said that the first Westphalian was created by God from a stone. The stone opened its eyes, regarded God with a surly expression, and growled 'Was willst du denn da?'

This is a motif which we can trace back to Bronze Age Egypt. On the Amada and Elephantine stelae it is said in praise of Amenophis II (c.1427–1400):

He is a king very weighty of arm: there is none who can draw his bow in his army, among the rulers of foreign countries, or the princes of Retenu, because his strength is so much greater than (that of) any (other) king who has existed.⁵⁴

Amenophis further demonstrated his prowess as an archer by shooting through a row of metal targets:

He drew three hundred strong bows, comparing the workmanship of the men who had crafted them, so as to tell the unskilled from the skilled. He also came to do the following which is brought to your attention. Entering his northern garden, he found erected for him four targets of Asiatic copper, of one palm in thickness, with a distance of twenty cubits between one post and the next. Then his majesty appeared on the chariot like Mont in his might. He drew his bow while holding four arrows together in his fist. Thus he rode northward shooting at them, like Mont in his panoply, each arrow coming out at the back of its target while he attacked the next post. It was a deed never yet done, never yet heard reported.⁵⁵

Amenophis' father Tuthmosis III had also shot through a copper target. His own accomplishment of the feat is depicted on the third Pylon in the temple at Karnak. Other artistic representations show the pharaohs Ay (1323–1318) and Ramesses II (1279–1213) shooting through similar targets, Ay from a chariot, Ramesses standing; the Ramesses representation is on a seal found in Syria. Burkert and Walcot have pointed out that the targets on these monuments are represented as 'oxide' ingots with concave sides and supported on poles, and might at a casual glance be taken for double axes. They suggest with great plausibility that a misinterpretation of some such scene may have given rise to the idea of shooting through a line of axes.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ ANET 247, cf. 244. The bow that hardly anyone can draw also appears in eastern settings in two stories told by Herodotus. (i) The Ethiopian king sends Cambyses a bow and advises him not to try invading Ethiopia until Persians can easily draw it. The only Persian who can make any impression on it is Smerdis, and he can only draw it an inch or two (3. 21. 3, 30. 1). (ii) The Scythian nation is established by Scythes, who is the youngest of three brothers fathered on a local snake-nymph by Heracles, and the only one of them who can draw his father's bow (4. 9. 5–10, 3).

⁵⁵ Sphinx stela, Lichtheim, II. 41 f. (ANET 244), compared by Germain, 13 n. 6; Stella (1955), 120 f.; W. Burkert, *Grazer Beiträge* 1, 1973, 69–78; P. Walcot, *SMEA* 25, 1984, 357–69; W. E. McLeod in *Studies presented to Sterling Dow*, GRBS Monograph 40, 1984, 203–10.

⁵⁶ Armant stela, ANET 243; H. Chevrier, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 28, 1928, 126 fig. 5; T. M. Davies, *The Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatânkhamanou*, London 1912, 127 fig. 3; A. Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals, and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum*, Cairo 1936, 252 f., pl. xxviii; W. E. McLeod, *AJA* 66, 1962, 13–15; Burkert, op. cit., 73, 74–6; Walcot, op. cit., 368 f. figs. 1–3.

The motif of an archery contest that takes place at or following a feast appears in a fragmentary Hittite mythical narrative concerning Gurparanzahu, king of Ailanuwa. After assisting his father-in-law Impakru, who is probably king of Akkad, to kill a wild beast that is ravaging the country, he comes to Akkad in triumph and the feast takes place. In the archery contest he defeats sixty kings, seventy heroes. Impakru and Gurparanzahu retire to bed, and the latter converses there with his wife Tatizuli, Impakru's daughter. There are obvious reminders of the *Odyssey* in this, but some writers have overstated them: the text does not suggest that Gurparanzahu kills the kings and heroes, or that he has to recover his wife.⁵⁷

More extensive parallels for the *Odyssey*'s dénouement are found in later narratives from further east, from India (the *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, and other texts) and central Asia (above all the widely diffused oral epic of Alpamysh). Here we meet the hero who comes in disguise to win a princess, draws a bow that defeats the strength of others, and performs astonishing feats of archery, for example hitting a target through holes in a revolving disc.⁵⁸ The currency of these stories in those regions is of extreme interest in relation to the question of the *Odyssey*'s origins; but it is something that we cannot pursue here.

20. 98–121. Odysseus appeals to Zeus to give proof of his favour by showing him a sign, or rather two signs, and Zeus at once does so. For this idea that a mortal may ask a god for a sign as an earnest of favour, and receive it immediately, cf. p. 399 on *Il.* 24. 310–21.

20. 201–3. Philoitios scolds Zeus:

'Father Zeus, there is no other god more baneful than you: you show no pity for men, after you yourself have begotten them, (nor scruple) to involve them in misery and grievous woes.'

The idea that Zeus himself is the father of mankind is remarkable; the formula 'father of gods and men' does not reflect the presuppositions of normal discourse. Burkert (1991, 174) points out that 'in Akkadian as in Hebrew, the "creation" of mankind by a god and the consequent responsibility of that god towards his "creature" is a commonplace'. In the Babylonian Flood story Belet-ili, the Mistress of the Gods, who herself created mankind, repents of having agreed to the cataclysm:

⁵⁷ H. G. Güterbock, *ZA* 44, 1938, 83–90; id. (1946), 118; *TUAT* iii. 852 f. (*CTH* 362). The overstatement (and the mis-spelling 'Gurpanzah') appear in Stella (1955), 146 f., and are copied by Webster (1958), 84.

⁵⁸ Cf. Germain, 11–54; V. Zhirmunsky, 'The Epic of "Alpamysh" and the Return of Odysseus', *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 52, 1966, 267–86; D. L. Page, *Folktales in Homer's Odyssey*, 106–8; G. K. Gresseth, *TAPA* 109, 1979, 63–85; Walcot, op. cit., 358.

'How was it that I spoke evil in the assembly of the gods,
spoke for aggression to destroy my people?
I am the one who gave birth to them, they are my people,
and (now) they fill the sea like fish.'

(*Gilg.* XI 120–3; cf. *Atr.* III 146 f., 170 f.) In *Enūma eliš* Tiamat protesting at Apsu's proposal to destroy their children, says (I 45) 'Why should we ourselves destroy what we created?' In *The Fox* (BWL 1900 obv. 9–12) we find the sentiment expressed to the highest god by a lower creature. The Fox angrily addresses Enlil: 'Enlil, my lord, do not destroy what you created!' Similarly in the Old Testament: 'Your hands shaped me and made me; at the same time you turn round and swallow me up' (Job 10. 8, cf. 3); 'Do not abandon what your hands have made' (Ps. 138. 8). Burkert comments that the *Odyssey* passage may be seen as an orientalizing motif, except that the Greek poet had to replace the idea of divine 'creation' by the 'begetting' familiar from myth.

20. 273 f. Antinous acknowledges that the suitors must put up with Telemachus' boldness; they would have put a stop to it by now, 'but Zeus did not allow it'. He is referring to the failure of their previous plans to do away with him. Bogan (399) compared Gen. 31. 7, where Jacob speaks of his uncle Laban's constant attempts to do him down 'but God has not allowed him to harm me'.

20. 299–302. (i) The suitor Ctesippus hurls the end of a leg of beef at Odysseus. Gordon ([1952], 93; [1962], 70) compares *Gilg.* VI v 12 where Enkidu tears out the Bull of Heaven's shoulder and flings it at Ishtar with contumely. The passage has already been cited in connection with *Il.* 22. 20. (ii) Odysseus inclines his head to avoid it, and 'smiled in his heart quite bitterly'. The idea of smiling or laughing internally is unusual; the nearest Greek parallel is perhaps Aesch. *Cho.* 738, where the Nurse speaks of Clytaemestra concealing 'her internal laughter'. In Gen. 18. 12 Sarah 'laughed inside herself' at the idea that she would become pregnant at her age (Bogan, 310). (iii) Ctesippus' missile misses Odysseus and hits the wall. It was Bogan again who compared I Sam. 19. 10: 'And Saul sought to spear David to the wall; but he gave way before Saul, and he struck the spear into the wall.'

20. 351–7. Theoclymenus has a prophetic vision of a type unparalleled in Homer and rarely found elsewhere in Greek literature (cf. Russo ad loc.). He sees the suitors wrapped in night, weeping and wailing, the walls spattered with blood, the hall full of souls of the dead speeding on their way to the underworld;⁵⁹ the sun has disappeared from

⁵⁹ Or perhaps 'to the sunset'; cf. p. 153.

the sky, and an evil darkness has invaded. We are reminded especially of *Amos* 8. 9 f.:

'And it shall be on that day' — (thus) the oracle of the lord Yahweh —
'that I shall bring in the sun at mid-day
and darken the earth in broad daylight.
And I will turn your festivals into mourning rites
and all your songs into a dirge.'

The motif of the sun being turned to darkness appears also in Mic. 3. 6, *Isa.* 2. 31 (Bogan, 311), and in the Deir 'Allā text, i 6 (Hackett, 26, 29).

21. 412. When Odysseus succeeds in stringing the bow, the suitors are chagrined and all their complexions change. On this reaction see p. 100.

Victory

22. 239 f. As the battle continues, Athena assumes the form of a swallow and perches on a rafter. The general motif of deities turning into birds has been discussed elsewhere (pp. 184 f.). For a goddess as a bird sitting on a rafter we may compare the Sumerian Lament of Inanna, *CT* xv 24 = Falkenstein-von Soden, 184 (cited by F. Dirlmeier, *Gnomon* 26, 1954, 196): 'Like a timorous dove I passed the time on a rafter; like a flying bat I slipped into the cracks in the wall.'

23. 10 ff., 58 ff. Penelope's incredulity at the good news may be compared with Jacob's when he is told that Joseph is still alive, Gen. 45. 26 (Krenkel, 43). Cf. below on 24. 321–48.

23. 241–6. Athena delays the dawn for Odysseus' and Penelope's sake. See p. 357 on *Il.* 2. 411–18.

24. 1–204. The poet has treated us to an imaginative account of the suitors' reception in the underworld by the heroes already resident there. A Hebrew prophet made use of a similar fancy (*Isa.* 14. 9 f.):

Sheol down there is astir for you to meet your coming;
it rouses the mighty dead for you, all the flock leaders of the earth;
it makes all the kings of the nations stand up from their thrones.
All of them will respond and say to you,
'You too are made infirm like us, you are become similar to us!'

As it stands, the passage refers to the king of Babylon (14. 4), and should therefore date only from the Exile, but it has been plausibly suggested⁶⁰

⁶⁰ H. Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen* I, 1897, 414; O. Eissfeldt (as ch. 2, n. 94), 320, who calls the passage 'one of the most sublime products of Hebrew poetry', which 'owes its effectiveness not least to its use of mythological motifs'; J. D. Hawkins, *CAH* iii(1), 422.

that it was originally Isalah's song of triumph at the sudden death in battle of Sargon in 705, later adapted to a different situation.

24. 12. On their way to Hades the ghosts pass 'the gates of the Sun (cf. p. 142) and the community of Dreams'. If some association between the two is implied, it may be relevant to cite the Babylonian lexical work known as *AN* = *Anun*, in which the dream-gods Mamu and Ziquiqu are said to be the daughter and son of Shamash (Oppenheim [1956], 232).

24. 321-48. At first Odysseus conceals his identity from the aged Laertes and teases him with fictitious tales. Having reduced his father to utter misery, he is overcome by emotion at the spectacle and reveals himself, adding that he has triumphed over all his enemies. Laertes' initial reaction (like Penelope's) is scepticism, and he asks for proof. Once this is provided, he is overcome and his knees give way (ἀόλο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ). He throws his arms round Odysseus even as he faints. We may recall the simile at 16. 15-21, where Eumaeus greets the returned Telemachus with profuse kisses and tears, 'as when a loving father embraces his son who returns from a distant land in the tenth year, his only son, over whom he has suffered long'.

There is some similarity to the account of Joseph's reunion with his old father Jacob (Bogan, 318). Joseph has been absent for many years, and after re-establishing contact with his brothers he keeps his identity concealed from them for a long time and plays mean tricks on them. It is only on hearing of his father's misery that he is at last overcome by emotion and reveals who he is (Gen. 45. 1). His brothers are at first dumbstruck, but after further reassurance they all embrace and weep. The brothers go back home and tell Jacob that Joseph is still alive and ruler of Egypt, 'and his heart fainted, because he did not believe them' (45. 26). When Joseph finally meets him, 'he fell on his neck and wept on his neck continually' (46. 29).

24. 351 f. Laertes exclaims, 'Father Zeus, then truly you gods still exist on Olympus, if the suitors have really paid for their wickedness!' The punishment of the transgressor confirms the existence of divine justice. Bogan (402) compared Ps. 9. 17(16), 'Yahweh has made himself known, he has executed judgment: the guilty one is ensnared in the work of his own hands.'

24. 435 f. Euphithes, Antinous' father, declares that life will no longer be worth living if he cannot avenge his son. For this attitude to an actual or potential situation cf. pp. 258 f.

CONCLUSION

It will not escape the grateful reader that this collection of miscellaneous oriental comparisons has fallen out at less than half the length of its counterpart in the *Iliad* chapter: 70 lemmata as against 169, if I have counted correctly. It is true that some things have been passed over briefly or entirely here because they had already been discussed there, but that is only a very minor factor in the difference of material quantity. The fact seems to be that, apart from the conspicuous Gilgamesh elements in the *Apologoi*, the *Odyssey* is much less thickly sown with Near Eastern themes and motifs than the *Iliad*. The relative sketchiness of its divine machinery is one aspect of this.

The Gilgamesh elements come almost entirely from Tablets IX-XI of the Gilgamesh epic, the portion concerned with the hero's journeying after the death of Enkidu. Those which we had occasion to discuss in relation to the *Iliad*, on the other hand, came mainly from the earlier part, concerned with Gilgamesh's dealings with Enkidu, that is, Tablets I-VIII (and X where Gilgamesh speaks of his grief for Enkidu). The ghost episode in Tablet XII is echoed in both the Homeric epics.

In their relationships to the Gilgamesh epic, then, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* present a mutually complementary picture. This should not be interpreted as an indication that someone made a deliberate distribution of Gilgamesh material between the two poems, or that someone set out to compose two contrasted epics that should exploit different types of material from the Gilgamesh epic. It is a natural reflection of the difference between the two Greek poets' interests and focus: the one preoccupied with human action, interaction, and inner emotion in situations of the utmost realism, the other with a solitary hero's tenacity of purpose through extraordinary adventures and adversities.

9

Myths and Legends of Heroes

FOLK-TALE MOTIFS

By the late sixth century there existed a body of written epic containing within it one or more versions of most of the stories that made up what we think of as Classical mythology. Besides the Cyclic epics dealing with the Trojan War and its aftermath, there were the *Oidipodeia*, *Thebais*, and *Epigoni*, concerned with the saga of the Labdacids at Thebes; the *Danaï* and *Phoroni*, treating of Argive legends; the *Corinthiaca* ascribed to Eumelus, which focussed on Corinth; the *Naupactia*, that included the story of the Argo's voyage; the 'Hesiodic' *Melampodia*, that contained stories of famous seers; Pisander of Rhodes' epic about the deeds of Heracles, and other poems on individual exploits of his; and more. Towards the end of the period an Attic poet (as I believe) took the various genealogies current in different mythological traditions and worked them into a single comprehensive system which he expounded in a five-book continuation of Hesiod's *Theogony*, the so-called *Catalogue of Women* or *Ehoiai*. Here most of the myths were at least alluded to, and set in a context. Epic poetry, of course, was not the only vehicle for mythical narrative. It often found a place in lyric, above all in the extended cantatas of Stesichorus. Around the end of the sixth century the first of the logographers appeared, Hecataeus of Miletus.

Since the appearance in 1932 of Nilsson's famous book *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* it has been generally accepted that a substantial kernel of Greek myth goes back to the Bronze Age, at least in broad outline. The fundamental argument is that the places which appear as important seats of power in the myths, such as Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Thebes, Iolcus, Cnossos, Troy, actually were so in the late Bronze Age, and for the most part never again. However, the myths were constantly changing and evolving, and often we have no means of determining the age of the details and motifs which we find in the recorded versions. Indeed, as we frequently depend on sources of post-Classical date, we cannot always tell how much already stood in versions of the Archaic period and how much is due to later treatments, for example by the tragedians.

Such uncertainties notwithstanding, the attempt will here be made to identify myths and mythical themes current in Archaic or early Classical Greece (other than those discussed in the preceding chapters) which appear to have precedents or cognates in the Near East.

None of them will certainly come under the heading of folk-tale motifs such as may often be paralleled from other parts of the world. Such a motif may be represented by more than one story within the Greek corpus, or within the Near Eastern complex. An obvious instance that has already been discussed is what I have called the Zuleika theme (p. 165), the story of the married woman who tries unsuccessfully to seduce a virtuous young man and then accuses him of having tried to seduce or rape her. We noted its recurrence in two oriental and several Greek stories. Here are a few further examples of folk-tale themes:

1. The child who is abandoned at birth, or handed over to be killed, but who is brought up nevertheless and eventually succeeds to his proper inheritance.¹ The case of Oedipus, so familiar from Sophocles' play, will at once come to mind. In the tragedies of Euripides they proliferated (*Ion*, *Alexandros*, *Alope*, *Antiope*). Hellanicus told a tale of this kind about Neleus and Pelias, the twin sons of Tyro. In later sources we find them in connection with Telephus, Aegisthus, and Romulus and Remus. Herodotus relates a story of the same sort about Cyrus the Great, a historical person born not much more than a century previously.² We have several oriental examples, in which it is a regular motif that the child is committed to a river in a basket. The oldest appears in the Hittite narrative which Hoffner has entitled 'A Tale of Two Cities'.

[The Queen] of Kanesh once bore thirty sons in a single year. She said: 'What a horde is this which I have borne!' She caulked(?) baskets with grease, put her sons in them, and launched them in the river. The river carried them down to the men at the land of Zalpuwa. But the gods took them up out of the sea and reared them.³

From seventh century Assyria we have a text in which the legendary Sargon of Akkad is made to recount the story of his birth. He tells that his mother was a high priestess, his father unknown. She bore him in secret, sealed him up in a reed basket, and floated it off down the

¹ Cf. Frazer, ii, 438-55; Baumgartner, 162 n. 14; G. Binder, *Die Aussetzung des Königskindes. Kyros und Romulus*, Meisenheim 1964; D. B. Redford, *Nunin* 14, 1967, 209-28; R. Drews, *JNES* 13, 1974, 387-93; B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend* (as ch. 2, n. 29).

² For Eur. *Alex.* see the Hypothesis in P.Oxy. 3650 (= Hyg. *Fab.* 91; cf. also Soph. *Alex.* fr. 93); *Antiope*, Hyg. *Fab.* 8, cf. sch. A. R. 4, 1090, Apollod. 3, 5, 5; Hellan. 4 F 123 with sch. AD II. 10, 134; Telephus, Diod. 4, 33, 8-12, al.; Aegisthus, Hyg. *Fab.* 87, 88; others, *ibid.* 252; Romulus and Remus, Fabius Pictor *FGH Hist* 809 F 4 (perhaps after Diocles of Peparethus, 820 T 2), etc.; Cyrus *ibid.* 1, 107 ff.

³ H. Otten, *Eine altheithitische Erzählung um die Stadt Zalpa*, Wiesbaden 1973; Gurney (1977), 7 f.; Hoffner, 62, whose translation I have quoted with one modification; *TUAT* iii, 805-7.

Euphrates. The river brought him to Akki, a drawer of water, who unpacked him, fostered him, and set him to work in his orchard. Ishtar favoured him, and he became the great king of Akkad, which he ruled for 55 years.⁴ Of the classical versions, it is the story of Romulus and Remus that agrees most closely with this Assyrian myth, for they, like Sargon, are born to a priestess, the paternity being uncertain, and they are set afloat on the Tiber in a container. The biblical tale of the infant Moses (Exod. 2. 1-11) shows an adaptation of the motif. Here the child is laid in a papyrus basket, which is waterproofed with pitch as if it were to be floated down the river, but instead of that it is merely deposited in the riverside reeds. The reason is obvious: the author wants Moses' mother to be in the vicinity when he is found by the Egyptian princess, so that she can engage her as his nurse.

2. The vital hair.⁵ Nisus, the king of Megara, had a purple or golden hair in the middle of his head, and it was known from an oracle that if it was removed he would die. When Minos was attacking Megara, he seduced Nisus' daughter Scylla with a gold necklace, and she betrayed her city by pulling out her father's remarkable hair while he was asleep. Practically the same story is told of the Taphian king Pterelaus and his daughter Comaetho in connection with an attack by Amphitryon. These tales have often been compared with that of Samson, whose strength resided in his unshorn hair. His enemies, the Philistines, bribed his mistress Delilah to discover this. She then had him shorn while he slept, and he was captured.⁶ This is not closely related to the Greek myths—it is his whole head of hair that is important, not just a single hair, and it is his strength, not his life, that depends on it—but there is an evident affinity.

3. The twin brothers who fight in the womb. Of Crisus and Panopeus, the sons of Phocus and Asterodeia and eponyms of the Phocian towns Crisa and Panopeus, it is written that 'even before they saw the bright sunlight they fought, [while still in their] mother's belly'. This presaged the constant strife that obtained between the two towns. It was exactly so with Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob. They beat each other about inside the womb of their mother Rebekah. She went to enquire of the oracle of Yahweh, and he explained,

'Two nations are in your belly,
and two folks from your bowels shall be divided;

⁴ Lewis, op. cit.; Foster, 819 f., who writes 'language and content point to a first millennium date for this composition, which may have its origins in the court of Sargon II of Assyria [721-705], who named himself after Sargon'.

⁵ Cf. O Höfer in Roscher, iii 3263 f.; Frazer, ii, 482-502; Baumgartner, 163.

⁶ Nisus: Aesch. *Cho.* 613-22, etc.; Pterelaus: Apollod. 2. 4. 5, 7; Samson: Jdg. 16. 4-31.

and folk shall be stronger than folk,
and the elder shall serve the younger.'⁷

4. The man who jumps or is thrown from a ship in mid sea, but is brought safely to land by a large sea creature. The citharode Arion, sailing from Tarentum to Corinth with his earnings from a concert tour, found that the sailors planned to seize his money and throw him overboard. He agreed to jump, after first taking his stance on the benches in his full citharodic kit and singing the *Orthios Nomos* (which began with celebration of Apollo) to his lyre. Once in the sea, he was picked up by a dolphin and carried to shore at Taenarum. The story is at least partially parallel to that of Jonah, who, after being thrown into the sea by storm-tossed sailors to appease the fury of Yahweh, was swallowed by a 'great fish'. He stayed inside it for three days, sang a psalm, and was conveniently disgorged onto dry land. It is noteworthy that both stories involve the performance of a religious song by the hero.⁸

5. The person who escapes pursuit by praying to a heavenly power and being metamorphosed. The classic Greek story of this kind is that of the maiden Daphne who was pursued by Apollo. She prayed to Zeus, or to Earth in a version in which Earth was her mother, and was instantly transformed into the bay-tree (*daphnē*) which Apollo loves. The motif appears much earlier in the Sumerian myth of Dumuzi, related in several texts. The young shepherd was being hunted by emissaries of the lower world. He prayed to the Sun-god to be changed into a gazelle, or in another version a lizard; the prayer was granted, and he was enabled to get away (though he was eventually caught and killed).⁹

6. The man who, in a war or other emergency, vows to sacrifice the first creature that should come to meet him when he returns home, and it turns out to be his own child. This is the biblical story of Jephthah, who made the vow in order to defeat the Ammonites. On his return the first to greet him was his only daughter. He was overcome with grief, but she persuaded him that he must keep his undertaking. The same story is related about Kerkaphos, who made the vow to the Mother of the Gods for the sake of victory over the Pessinuntians, and was greeted on his return by his son; about an anonymous magnate of Haliartus, who

⁷ 'Hes.' fr. 58. 12 f.; Gen. 25. 22 f., cf. Hos. 12. 3. The motif also appears in connection with Akrisios and Proitos, Apollod. 2. 2. 1.

⁸ Hdt. 1. 23 f. (who claims that the Corinthians and Lesbians agree on the story), Jonah 1-2.

⁹ It is not certain how old the Greek myth is. Vase paintings from about 500 show Apollo pursuing a girl, but the literary sources are not earlier than the third century BC (see Gantz, 90 f.). Dumuzi myth: *Dumuzi's Dream* 164 ff., 191 ff., 226 ff. (Jacobsen, 40-4; Bottéro-Kramer, 306-9); *Descent of Inanna* 352 ff. (Jacobsen, 226, 228; Bottéro-Kramer, 289, 296 f.); lament of Inanna, 72 ff. (Bottéro-Kramer, 315).

consulted Delphi about the cure for a drought, and was told to slaughter the first person who met him on his return—it was his son; and about Idomeneus, who made the fatal vow when caught in the storm on his way home from Troy, and again was met by his son. A related motif appears in the version of the Iphigeneia story according to which she had to be sacrificed because Agamemnon had vowed to make an offering of the year's most beautiful produce, and she was it (in Calchas' opinion).¹⁰

IO AND HER DESCENDANTS

One of the great genealogies of Greek mythology as codified in the *Catalogue of Women* was the Inachid, descended from the Argive river Inachus and a nymph. It dealt with figures of Argive and also Theban mythology, but it was remarkable for its orientalizing outlook. It offered a scheme of ancient connections between Argos and Thebes on the one hand and Crete, Lycia, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Libya on the other. Not all the details are certain, but according to the reconstruction which I have presented elsewhere¹¹ the essentials were as follows.

The Argive Io, whom Zeus continued to love even after Hera turned her into a cow, gave birth to Epaphos in Egypt. Epaphos was the father of Libye, the eponymous nymph of north Africa. She, in union with Poseidon, gave birth to Belos and Agenor.

Belos, who can be nothing but the Semitic Baal, was the father of Danaus and Aegyptus—eponyms of the Argive Danaoi and of the Egyptians—and of one Thronie, who bore Arabos, eponym of the 'Arabs' or desert-dwellers.¹² Aegyptus' fifty sons married Danaus' fifty daughters. From one of these marriages, that of Lynceus and Hypermetra, the later royal lines of the Argolid issued. The genealogy implies that they had Egyptian blood in their veins.

Agenor's sons included Phoenix, eponym of the Phoenicians, and Kadmos, founder of Thebes. (Or Kadmos may have been a son of Phoenix.) Phoenix was the father of Phineus and Europa by a daughter of Arabos, and of Adonis by another wife. Europa, loved by Zeus, gave birth to Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon. Minos reigned in Crete, and Sarpedon in Lycia.

¹⁰ Jdg. 11. 30–40; Timolaus *FGH* 798 F 1; Paus. 9. 33. 4; Serv. *Aen.* 3. 121; Eur. *I.T.* 20–4; Baumgartner, 152–4.

¹¹ West (1985), 76–89.

¹² The mention of Arabos in 'Hes.' fr. 137 is the first appearance in Greek of the name 'Arab', which comes from the West Semitic word represented in Hebrew *ʿarab*, 'desert- or steppe-dwellers'.

We are concerned here, for the moment, not so much with myths of oriental inspiration (though these may play an incidental role) as with myths about Graeco-oriental contacts. We must consider some of the personnel more closely.

Io and Epaphos

The strange tale of Io's transformation into a cow originally had a local Argive setting. Io was a priestess of Hera, whose unflattering Homeric epithet βοῶπις, 'cow-face', bears witness to the bovine associations of the cult. Hera's temple stood on a hill called Euboea, 'Good for cattle', and in the earlier form of the myth it was here that Io's frenzied roaming ended. It reflects some traditional ritual in which the priestess, wearing cow's horns, was pursued to the temple by someone carrying an ox-goad. This had its mythical counterpart in the gadfly that drove the cow Io from land to land. It is less clear what corresponded to her coupling with Zeus (who assumed the form of a bull, Aeschylus reassures us) and to the birth of Epaphos. Probably a bull and cow were mated in a ceremony intended to promote the fertility of the cattle; but did the horned priestess play some supporting role in this? Speculation is free.¹³

The theme of a celestial god's love for a heifer, bizarre as it may seem to us, has parallels in Akkadian, Hurro-Hittite, and Ugaritic mythology.¹⁴ In Akkadian, from the Old Babylonian period to the Neo-Assyrian, we find various versions of the story that Sin, the Moon-god, fell in love with a cow and mounted her in the form of a young bull. She was called Geme-Sin, that is, 'Sin's Maid'. When the time came for her to give birth, he heard her cries of pain and sent down two daughters of Anu from heaven to ease her delivery. They rubbed oil on her forehead and sprinkled her all over with 'the water of labour'. The calf then dropped lightly to the ground.¹⁵

In the Hurro-Hittite myth it is the Sun-god who looks down from the sky and espies a desirable cow. He comes down in the shape of a young

¹³ The myth of Minos' wife Pasiphae, who got into a dummy cow in order to be mounted by a divine bull, suggests the possibility of some rite in the course of which priestess and cow changed places. Aeschylus on Zeus' mating with Io as a bull: *Supp.* 301. One of the words for 'gadfly', γάδῳ, can also mean 'goad'. The motif of the pursuit of a god's female votaries with an ox-goad appears in the myth of Lycurgus (*Il.* 6. 132–5). A kindred Argive myth is that of the daughters of Proitos, who (in one of the several versions) were made insane by Hera, believed themselves to be cows, or were actually turned into cows. They are said to have been cured after being pursued by the seer Melampous and a posse of young men with wild cries and a kind of ecstatic dancing. See Gantz, 312 f.

¹⁴ Cf. Astour, 84–92; J. Duchemin, *RÉG* 92, 1979, 41–5, and *RHR* 197, 1980, 40–2 (= her *Mythes grecs et sources orientales*, Paris 1995, 218–21 and 182–4).

¹⁵ W. Röllig, *Or. NS.* 54, 1985, 260–73; *TUAT* ii. 274–6; Foster, 891 f.

man and speaks with her. Following a very fragmentary passage, the cow is pregnant. She gives birth to a two-legged creature (something like the Minotaur?). This disgusts her, and she is preparing to eat it when the Sun-god intervenes to save his child. Before departing, he scratches its limbs and head. He then arranges for it to be guarded by fierce birds and snakes, until a childless fisherman comes (apparently by the Sun-god's design), finds it, scratches its limbs, head, and eyes, takes it home, and persuades his wife to pretend that she has borne it herself. The sequel is lost.¹⁶

In the Ugaritic corpus it is Baal, the storm-god, the most energetic member of the pantheon, who makes love to a cow. In a brief episode in the Baal epic we read:

He loved a heifer in the pasture,
a cow in a field of the shore of the place of death.
He lay down with her seven on seventy (times),
she had him mount (her) eight on eighty (times).
And [she conceived, and she bore a male(?).
Vic[torious Baal] clothed him [...]

Another text gives us a more extended but more obscure narrative in which 'Anat goes to find her brother by a river at which wild cattle graze. He greets her and apparently refers to her horns. She fixes her gaze on a cow, and circles round it. In the next column there is mention of cows giving birth, and of Baal advancing with penis erect; then of a cow bearing a bull-calf for Baal. 'Anat goes up to Mt. Šapan and announces the birth to Baal as a glorious event, and he rejoices.¹⁷ The participation of a goddess in the story, herself perhaps furnished with the horns of a cow, recalls the involvement of Hera in the myth of Io, even though 'Anat's attitude towards the cow is wholly favourable, not inimical. We recall that as 'Anat is Baal's sister, so Hera is Zeus'; admittedly it is her role as his jealous wife that functions as the mainspring of the story as we have it in the classical sources.

Io's offspring was called Epaphos. The Greeks associated the name with the word *epaphē* 'a touching, laying on of hands', and explained that Zeus had laid his hand on Io to turn her into a cow, or back from a cow into a woman, or to make her conceive.¹⁸ This detail in the story may have been invented to account for Epaphos' name. But the emphasis in the Hurro-Hittite myth on the scratching of the cow's

offspring, both by the Sun-god and by the fisherman, raises the possibility that this is an original element, perhaps reflecting a ritual action.¹⁹

There is some ambiguity as to whether Epaphos was a calf or a human child. In the fifth-century poets he seems to be treated as a human being, a splendid son, ruler of Egypt, founder of cities there, and ancestor of the Belid and Agenorid families. On the other hand, Herodotus states that Epaphos is the Greeks' name for the divine bull-calf Apis which appeared in Egypt from time to time.²⁰

Some modern scholars have supposed that 'Epaphos' is in fact a distortion of the Egyptian *p3-kp* 'the Apis', or alternatively of *p3-p(y)* (Apopi, Manetho's Aphophis), the name of two or three historical Hyksos kings.²¹ In favour of one or other of these identifications is the fact that Epaphos' life and activity are located entirely in Egypt. There is nothing to suggest that he appeared in the original Argive myth of Io's pursuit to the hill Euboea. We have some reason to suspect that her wanderings were extended by stages: first to the island of Euboea, later on a transcontinental scale.²² It is at least a plausible assumption that the extension to Egypt was due to Greek (Argive?) settlers living at Nuocratis in the late seventh or the sixth century, who desired a mythical link between the Nile-land and Greece and made an existing Egyptian figure into the son of the vagrant cow Io. The Apis bull, who was for the natives a manifestation of the god Ptah, seems a somewhat likelier point of attachment than an obscure Hyksos king, and we know that Apis and Epaphos were equated in the fifth century. Besides Herodotus' statement, it may be significant that Aeschylus speaks of Io as having finished her journey at Memphis, which was the centre of the Apis cult.

We cannot leave Io without commenting on the remarkable verse of Jeremiah (46. 20):

A heifer most beautiful is Egypt,
(but) a gadfly has come upon her from the north.

The context is a prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's aggression against the country. If there is any significance in the association of Egypt with a heifer persecuted by a gadfly, the image must somehow have been

¹⁹ The Hittite word is *hahreskizzi*; some translate 'stroke'. Perhaps the rubbing of the cow with oil in the Babylonian Geme-Sin myth should also be recalled.

²⁰ Aesch. *Supp.* 581, *PV* 851 f. (where Io is explicitly said to have been restored to human form before the birth), Pind. *Nem.* 10. 5, cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 149, Apollod. 2. 1. 4; Hdt. 2. 38, 153, 3. 27 f., cf. Ael. *H.A.* 11. 10. Aeschylus' two references to Epaphos as 'the Zeus-calf', ὁ Διὸς πρόπρις, *Supp.* 41, 314, allude to the circumstances of his conception but not to his own physique.

²¹ J. Bérard, *Syria* 29, 1952, 35; Astour, 94, 388; Bernal, i. 92.

²² West (1985), 145–54; cf. Gantz, 203.

¹⁶ *CTH* 363; J. Friedrich, *ZA* 49, 1950, 224–32; Hoffner, 65–7; *TUAT* iii. 853–6.

¹⁷ *KTU* 1. 5 v 18 ff.; 1. 10 (Caquot-Szymer, 281–9).

¹⁸ Aesch. *Supp.* 45, 313–15, 535, 1066, [Aesch.] *PV* 848–51, Soph. fr. 269a. 34, Apollod. 2. 1. 3, sch. Eur. *Pho.* 678, Nonn. *D.* 3. 284–6.

inspired by the Greek myth. But it is probably a mere coincidence. Hosea (4, 16, 10, 11) had likened Israel to a young cow and Ephraim to a heifer, and once this metaphor had come to Jeremiah's mind for Egypt the gadfly was a natural symbol of the assailant.

Belos, Arabos, Danaos, and the Danaids

Epaphos' daughter Libye had two sons, Belos and Agenor. They are not credited with any deeds; they are merely links in a genealogical series. Belos belongs exclusively in an orientalizing construction, since he is, as has long been seen, the Semitic god Baal. The word *ba'lu* (Akk. *bēlu*, Aram. *bē'al*, Heb. *bā'al*) meant 'master'. It developed as a divine name in the same way as did other words meaning 'master', 'lord', 'lady', etc. in ancient languages. In Mesopotamia *Bēl(u)* became especially a name of Marduk, though also of other gods in different centres and contexts; in Canaan *Ba'lu* or *Ba'al* became the normal designation of Hadad, the storm-god. The Phoenicians carried his cult all round the Mediterranean, and Greeks in the east would have come across many local Baals, perhaps participated in their worship. As with Epaphos, it must have been such expatriate Greeks, presumably in Egypt or the Levant, who adopted Baal (from Aramaic-speakers?) and saw in him a figure of sufficient importance to stand as the father of Aegyptus and Danaus. It must have been they too, not the stay-at-homes of continental Greece, who were aware of the 'arab', the desert peoples of Sinai and the Negev, and who introduced Arabos as another descendant of Belos, on a lower level than Aegyptus and Danaus.

The yoking of Aegyptus and Danaus together as brothers reflects the desire to put the Danaoi of Greek heroic tradition on a par with the ancients of Egypt, and the willingness to believe (as many classical writers believed) in an oriental contribution to early Greek civilization.²³ Egypt's claims to primacy, however, are countered by the consideration that the brothers' great-great-grandmother came from Argos in the first place. All of this is surely a construction of the Archaic age. It should not be taken as embodying a memory of some historical irruption of Egyptians or Hyksos into Greece in the sixteenth or fifteenth century, as is sometimes naively supposed.

The myth of the multiple marriage of the fifty sons of Aegyptus to their cousins the Danaids has something of a parallel in the Hittite 'Tale

of 'Two Cities' that was cited earlier in this chapter for the motif of babies cast adrift in baskets.²⁴ Some years after the Queen of Kanesh's thirty sons had been carried away by the river, she gave birth to thirty daughters, and these she reared herself. The sons meanwhile grew up at Zalpuwa on the Black Sea. (The myth serves as the introduction to an account of relations between that city and the early Hittite kingdom.) Eventually they came back to Kanesh, and discovered that the queen was their mother. She, however, failed to recognize them, and welcomed them as husbands for her daughters. Most of the sons were in favour of marrying them, but one, the youngest, objected, on the ground that it was an impious thing to marry their own sisters.

The rest of the story is unfortunately lost. But whatever happened next, it already shows several features in common with the story of the Danaids. There are the two fabulously large broods of children, one exclusively of males, the other of females; the fact that they are kin (siblings in the Hittite myth, cousins in the Greek); their domiciling in two different places at a considerable distance from one another; the journey of the males to the girls' country, where their own roots in fact lie; the plan for a multiple marriage. Aeschylus represents the Danaids as fleeing from the proposed marriage and objecting to it as somehow impious. The reason for their attitude has always been something of a puzzle, since marriage between cousins was not generally regarded as incestuous;²⁵ in the Hittite myth the objection is more obvious. A further shared motif is the dissent of one of the partners from the collective design. One of the young men from Zalpuwa objected to the incestuous nuptials; and one of the sons of Aegyptus, Lynceus, refrained from consummating his marriage to Hypermestra, which is why she spared his life when her sisters all conspired to murder their bridegrooms.²⁶

Another of the Danaids was Amymone, for whom Poseidon produced the springs at Lerna by striking the rock with his trident. There was a fountain in Laconia said to have been created by Atalanta striking the rock with her spear, and another in Messenia that Dionysus struck forth with his thyrsus. The motif is exactly paralleled in the Old Testament: Moses produces a fountain from the rock at Horeb by striking it with his staff.²⁷

²⁴ Above, p. 439; the parallel noted by W. Burkert, *Gnomon* 54, 1982, 719.

²⁵ Aesch. *Supp.* 9, 37, etc., cf. *PV* 855; A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Suppliants. Play and Trilogy*, Cambridge 1969, 211–23; H. Friis Johansen and E. W. Whittle, *Aeschylus. The Suppliants*, Copenhagen 1980, i. 29–34; M. Sierck, *Mus. Helv.* 43, 1986, 82 ff.

²⁶ Apollod. 2. 1. 5, sch. Pind. *Nem.* 10. 10b; possibly Eur. *Archelaos* fr. 2. 4 Austin, but cf. A. Harder, *Euripides' Kresphontes and Archelaos*, Leiden 1985, 191 f.

²⁷ Eur. *Pho.* 187 with sch., Hyg. *Fab.* 169, 169a, Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 8. 3; Paus. 3. 24. 2, 4. 36. 7; Exod. 17. 5 f., Num. 20. 8–11; cf. Baumgartner, 163.

²³ If Tanayu was still remembered as an Egyptian name for Greece (p. 5), this might have favoured the focus on the Danaan name. The Dnln who are listed among the invading Sea Peoples in the time of Ramesses III are probably the Danuna of Cilicia and have nothing to do with the Danaoi.

Agenorids: Phoenix and Kadmos

Belos' brother Agenor was the father of Phoenix, who must be understood as the eponym of the Phoenicians; his oriental provenance is confirmed by the fact that in the *Catalogue of Women* he was married to a daughter of Arabos and became, by another wife, the father of Adonis.²⁸ Adonis, like Belos, is a Semitic divine title equipped with a Greek ending: Ugaritic *ʾdn*, Phoenician *ʾdn*, Hebrew *ʾādōn* 'lord', *ʾādōnāy* 'my Lord (God)'. Unlike Belos, he had an actual cult in Greece, at least by the time of Sappho.

Kadmos, the legendary founder of Thebes, is usually called a son of Agenor, but sometimes a son of Phoenix. Certainly by the fifth century the myth was established that he came originally from Tyre. Herodotus and others tell that his sister Europa was abducted from there, and that he and his brothers Kilix and Thasos went out in search of her and ended by founding new settlements in different places.²⁹

Enquiring after his sister at Delphi, Kadmos was told to seek out from the herd of Pelagon a cow that had never been yoked and that had certain specified markings, to follow it until it sank down from weariness, and there to sacrifice the beast and set about founding a city. The story has been compared with the biblical account of how the Philistines returned the captured Ark of Yahweh to the Hebrews. The diviners told them to put it on a wagon together with expiatory offerings, hitch the wagon to two cows that had never been yoked, and set them loose. The cows took the Ark straight to Bethshemesh, halted there, and were sacrificed for their pains by the rejoicing Hebrews. Ruth Edwards, however, points out that the animal guide leading to the site of a city is a common folk-tale motif.³⁰

The most interesting thing about Kadmos is his name. Besides the man himself, we have *Kadmeioi* or *Kadmeiōnes* as the standard epic designation of the ancient Thebans. We should treat this as the primary name to be explained. Peoples do not take their names from individuals; therefore Kadmos was not a historical person but simply the mythical eponym of the Kadmeioi.

The *Kadm-* in these names has no convincing Greek etymology, but a very easy Semitic one that has been repeatedly pointed to since Samuel

Hochart.³¹ The root *qdm*, from a basic meaning of 'before, in front', has two common senses in West Semitic, the spatial one of 'east, eastern' and the temporal one of 'ancient, antiquity'. In Ugaritic we find (a) *qdm* (*qadmu*) meaning 'the east'; (b) the adjectival derivative *qdmym* (*qadmiyūma*, plural of **qadmiyu*) 'peoples of the east'; (c) the same form as an epithet of *rpīm* (*Rāpi'ūma*), probably meaning 'the ancient healers' (i.e. the mighty dead); (d) the personal name *Qdmn* (*Qadmōn*), probably 'Easterner'. In Hebrew we find the noun *qēdem* (from older **qadmu*) and the adjectival *qadmōnī* in both the spatial and the temporal senses. *Bnē-qēdem* 'sons of the east' is a regular term for the nomadic tribes east of Palestine, whereas *malkē-qēdem* means 'kings of old'. 'The *Qadmōnī*' (collective singular) appears in one of the lists of the peoples of Canaan whom the Hebrews are to dispossess, and the plural of this form, *qadmōnīm*, stands in Job as a general term for 'peoples of the east' as opposed to those of the west. It can also mean 'the ancients, men of old' in such a phrase as *mēšal haqqadmōnī* 'a saying of the ancients'.³²

If we are to explain the name of the Kadmeioi (to which, as we have seen, that of Kadmos is secondary) from these linguistic data, we shall have to presuppose the residence in Boeotia at some period of a group of Semitic-speakers, presumably Phoenicians. This is after all something that the Greeks accepted as a fact, even if only on the basis of a myth, and as a historical possibility it is no more out of the way than the well-attested settlements of Achaeans in Crete or Cyprus, of Assyrians in Anatolia, or of Phoenicians in Sicily, Sardinia, Spain, and north Africa. We need not think in terms of an invading horde: a peaceful trading colony is much more likely.

Granted this premise, it becomes easy to explain 'Kadmeioi' as *Qadmiyūma* or **Qadmiyyīm*, either 'the men from the east' or 'the men of old'. But which? Those scholars who have been at all receptive to the Semitic etymology have tended to be equally receptive to the claim of the myth, that an original Kadmos arrived from Canaan many generations before the Trojan War. They have accepted the implication of a substantial Semitic element in the population of Boeotia in the late Bronze Age, and understand Kadmeioi as 'the Easterners'. In answer to the objection that these Semitic immigrants would not have been so designated by themselves but only by the natives in their own language,

²⁸ Ruth B. Edwards, *Kadmos the Phoenician*, Amsterdam 1979, 68 f. According to Pherecydes 3 F 21, Agenor's wife, Phoenix's mother, was a daughter of Belos.

²⁹ Cf. West (1985), 83.

³⁰ Hellanicus 4 F 51, Eur. *Pho.* 638–48 with sch., *Ov. Met.* 3. 6–13, *Apollod.* 3. 4. 1, etc.; 1 Sam. 6. 7–12; Astour, 157 f.; Edwards, op. cit., 42, 155.

³¹ S. Hochart, *Geographiae Sacrae pars altera: Chanaan, seu de colonis et sermone Phoenicum*, Leiden 1646, 486 f.; cf. Astour, 147–59; Edwards, op. cit., 58 n. 60; Brown, 37.

³² *KTU* 1. 12 i 8, 4 vii 34, 161. 8 (cf. Tropper, 124); *Gen.* 29. 1, *Jdg.* 6. 3, 33, etc.; *Isa.* 19. 11; *Gen.* 15. 19, *Job* 18. 20, 1 Sam. 24. 14(13).

it has been observed that the Norsemen called themselves Norsemen or Normans wherever they settled.³³

It seems to me just as plausible a hypothesis, however, that the immigrants were Phoenicians of the Iron Age, say in the ninth or eighth century, and that, seeing the impressive ruins of the Mycenaean citadel they attributed them to 'the men of old', the **qadmiyyīm*. They might also have applied the word to those occupants of ancient graves who in the eighth century were beginning to be the object of hero cults; we recall its use of the Ugaritic Healer-heroes. Its ambiguity, together with the immigrants' natural desire for status, might then have encouraged the notion that those **qadmiyyīm* were actually *bnê qadm*, sons of the East or sons of Kadmos.

Kadmos married Harmonia, daughter of Ares and Aphrodite. When she appears in other contexts, she seems to be thought of as a personified Accord, a figure akin to Aphrodite herself.³⁴ But what is the significance of such a goddess's marriage to Kadmos? If his name is Semitic, is it not a possibility that hers too conceals a Semitic meaning beneath its apparent Greekness? I have already referred to the role that the remains of the old citadel—the Kadmeia, as it was called—might have played in the development of this Theban mythology. Now, the Hebrew word for a citadel or fortified palace is *ʿarmôn*. Saul had a son named *ʿArmônî*, 'man of the citadel'. The word is often used in contexts of destruction and ruination.³⁵ It must be a Canaanite word, and there is some likelihood that it existed in Phoenician. If it was current in the Semitic quarter of Thebes, the Old Citadel might naturally be referred to as *ʿarmôn qadm*. This might be enough in itself to give rise to a mythical coupling of Kadmos and Harmonia as the former occupants of the palace. There are other possibilities. Astour, for example, postulates an actual goddess *ʿArmônît* or *ʿArmônîyā*, 'Lady of the Palace'; he cites the analogously titled Ugaritic goddess *Bʿlt-bt* or *Bʿlt-bhtm*, equivalent to the Akkadian *Bēlet-ēkallim*, who in turn corresponds to the Sumerian *Nin-ē-gal*.³⁶

³³ Astour, 223 n. 4; cf. Edwards, *op. cit.*, 146 with n. 157. The Phoenician colonists of the western Mediterranean, however, did not, so far as is known, call themselves 'easterners' but 'Canaanites'.

³⁴ See West (1966), 415.

³⁵ Amos 1. 4, 7, 10, 2. 5, Hos. 8. 14, Isa. 23. 13, 25. 2, etc.

³⁶ Astour, 160 f. Another possible West Semitic name in Theban cult is that of Zeus Elieus (Hesych. ε 2068; H. Schwabl, *RE Supp.* xv. 1454). As we also hear of a shrine of Zeus Hypsistos at Thebes (Paus. 9. 8. 5), it has been suggested that Elieus represents 'Elyōn, the West Semitic equivalent of Hypsistos (Astour, 217).

Europa and her children

Europa is another figure whose name has often been interpreted from Semitic, but with much less plausibility. In Hebrew, *ʿereb* means 'evening, sunset'; it appears to be a brachylogy corresponding to the Ugaritic *ʿrb špš* ('*arāb šapši*'), Akkadian *erēb šamši*, 'the going-in of the sun'. The same root prefixed gives *maʿarāb* 'the west' in Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic, and Arabic has unprefixed *garb* in this sense. On this basis, together with the entry in Hesychius Εὐρώπη· χώρα τῆς ἡσπέρως. ἢ σκοτεινῇ ('*Eurōpē*: land of (sun)set, or the dark one'), Europa has been held to stand for the West, the perfect counterpart to Kadmos 'East'. However, we have seen that this may not be the best interpretation of Kadmos' name; and while it is true that in the myth which makes them brother and sister Europa is taken from Tyre to the west, Kadmos follows her and travels just as far west himself. Phonologically the match between Europa's name and any form of the Semitic word is very poor.³⁷ The Hesychian entry, if it is saying anything more than that Europe is the western continent, merely attests to the antiquity of this etymology.

Europa, like Io, is loved by Zeus in bull form. She does not herself become a cow in extant versions, though it is suggestive that when Kadmos sets out in quest of her he ends up following a cow to Thebes: were this cow and Europa once the same? In any case the myth reminds us again of Near Eastern gods such as Sin and Baal who can make love on earth in bovine form. There are also the biblical references to the cult of a god whose idol was a golden calf.³⁸

In Crete Europa bore Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon, and found a domestic father for them by marrying the otherwise childless king Asteros, Asterios, or Asterion. Asterios or Asterion is also recorded as the name of the Minotaur, and Byzantine sources mention a Zeus Asterios worshipped at Gortyn.³⁹ This suggests that Europa's husband Asterios is really an alias of the bovine Zeus who had impregnated her, and that the Minotaur is another manifestation of him. It has been surmised that his name is, lightly disguised, the West Semitic *ʿAṭtar*/*ʿAštar*, the male counterpart of *ʿAṭtar*/*ʿAštar* (Astarte).⁴⁰ According to Lucian, the Phoenicians at Sidon in his time identified their Astarte with the Greeks' Europa. If that had any ancient basis, what

³⁷ Despite the efforts of Astour, 128–31, to reconcile them.

³⁸ Exod. 32. 4–8, 1 Ki. 12. 28–30, Ps. 106. 19 f.; Brown, 194.

³⁹ See K. Wernicke, *RE* ii. 1784. 55–1785. 10, 1786. 22–6; H. Schwabl, *ibid.* xA 281. 36–51 and *Supp.* xv. 1445. 7–20.

⁴⁰ Robertson Smith, 310; Luc. *De Syria dea* 4. On *ʿAṭtar* see J. Gray, *JNES* 8, 1949, 72–83; A. Caquot, *Syria* 35, 1958, 45–60; Caquot-Sznycer, 95.

seems to emerge is that the myth of Zeus and Europa is a Hellenized version of, or was equated with, a sacred union of 'Aštar and 'Aštart in the forms of bull and cow.

Of Europa's three sons, we have noted (p. 420) that Rhadamanthys has certain features reminiscent of Gilgamesh and Ut-napishtim. However, there is no reason to seek the origin of his name in eastern languages;⁴¹ the *-nth-* element is well known to be typical of pre-Hellenic names from the Aegean area.

There is more to say about Minos. Like Rhadamanthys and Gilgamesh, he was a judge in the underworld. In life he was a just king and lawgiver, and in the manner in which he obtained his laws, from conversations with Zeus in the cave on Mt. Ida, he is a striking parallel to Hammurabi and Moses, each of whom received his laws in private consultation with the god of justice on a holy mountain (above, pp. 135 f.). The phrase used of Minos in the *Odyssey*, Διὸς μεγάλου ὁμοιωτής, emphasizes the intimacy of the relationship; and so we read of Moses, 'Thus Yahweh used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend'.⁴² Minos' consultations were repeated every ninth year. This apparently reflects a custom of renewing the kingship after that interval. The nine-year reigns of the first kings of heaven in the Kumarbi myth have been compared.⁴³

Minos' wife Pasiphae, she who impersonated a cow in her craving to be mounted by a god-sent bull and who gave birth to the Minotaur, was a daughter of the Sun-god. Her name itself is appropriate to a solar figure. I have already cited the Hurro-Hittite myth in which it is the Sun-god himself who makes love to a cow, and the cow gives birth to a two-legged creature that to her, at least, seems a *monstrum horrendum informe*. I suggested that it might have been a kind of Minotaur, with a human body and legs but a bull's head. Such a figure is not unknown to oriental art; it is represented on an amulet from Ugarit.⁴⁴ More common is the so-called bull-man of Elamite and Mesopotamian art. This is also a two-legged creature, but the lower part is bovine and the upper part human (only with horns). In the second millennium he has a special association with the Sun-god Shamash, attending him or supporting him.⁴⁵ This can hardly be without a bearing on the Minotaur and his mother's solar connections.

Argive myths: Proitides, Perseus

We now return to the Argolid and to certain of the descendants of Iannus. His grandson Abas had two sons, Akrisios and Proitos. Proitos' daughters were the subject of a myth mentioned above (p. 443 n. 13) as a partial parallel to that of Io. The insanity that made them think they were women was one version of their punishment for impious hybris. In another version they were afflicted with lecherousness and with a kind of leprosy or scab: they itched terribly, white blotches covered their bodies, and their hair fell out. The lecherousness may have led them to bare their breasts or tear their clothes off; archaic representations of two women in such states of *déshabille* have been referred to them.⁴⁶

Leprosy or scab as a divine punishment is an exceptional motif in Greek mythology, but familiar in the Near East. It appears as a typical element in the curses essential to Akkadian treaties: if any party alters or destroys the text, 'may Sin cover you with the scab'. Miriam is stricken with a leprosy or leucoderma for speaking against Moses, so that her skin becomes like snow. The closest parallel for the Proitides' case, however, appears in Isaiah:

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
and walk with outstretched neck, making coquettish glances,
tripping along as they go, their ankles jingling,
the Lord will make the heads of the daughters of Zion scabby,
and Yahweh will expose their sockets(?) ...
Instead of perfume there will be the smell of decay,
and instead of a sash, a string,
and instead of a coiffure, baldness.⁴⁷

Akrisios' daughter gave birth to Perseus, whose fame was for slaying monsters: the sea-monster that threatened Andromeda, and the Gorgon Medusa. The Gorgon could not be classified as a danger to the public, since she lived on a remote island in the stream of Ocean. The reason given for Perseus' unprovoked attack on her was that he had been set the task of obtaining her head. This head had a status of its own. It is often represented in the visual arts as a decorative or apotropaic motif, and in the *Odyssey*, at the end of the Nekyia, Odysseus becomes afraid of the ghosts gathering about him and decides it is time to depart in case Persephone should send the terrible Gorgon's head at him from Hades. The clear implication is, not just that this is a face that spells death, but that it is a vision regularly sent by the infernal powers to capture the

⁴¹ De Moor, 2 (Assyrian personal name Radmānu, Ug. Rdmm(?) KTU 1.3 i 2); Bernal, ii, 23, 178-83 (Egyptian *Rdī Mtḥw 'Montu has given').

⁴² *Od.* 19.179; *Exod.* 33.11, cf. *Deut.* 34.10; Dornseiff, 265 f.

⁴³ B. C. Dietrich, *Acta Classica* 8, 1965, 19.

⁴⁴ H. Bossert, *Alttyrien*, Tübingen 1951, no. 603.

⁴⁵ J. A. Black and A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, London 1992, 48 f.

⁴⁶ Cf. 'Hes.' fr. 130-3; Gantz, 312.

⁴⁷ CAD S 36 f. s.v. *saharjubbu*; Num. 12.10; Isa. 3.16-24.

living for themselves. Perseus was warned not to look upon Medusa's face directly. He decapitated her therefore with averted gaze, and popped the head into a satchel (*kibisis*) to take it away.

We cannot trace an oriental precedent for the myth, but its representation in art was certainly influenced by eastern models.⁴⁸ The typical Archaic Gorgon face, a gross, hideously grinning mask, always shown frontally, and framed by a mass of snaky locks, is derived from an oriental type that goes back to the Old Babylonian period and was diffused over an area stretching from Iran to Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine. The oriental figure is male, a wild man with bristling hair, and there is reason to identify him as Humbaba, the ferocious guardian of the Cedar Forest whom Gilgamesh slew with the help of Enkidu. He is often shown being attacked by two warriors; he stands in the centre, facing to the front, while they are symmetrically disposed on either side, grasping him by the hair. In the Greek representations the one on the left becomes Perseus and the other his divine helper Athena. Perseus' head is turned away to avoid seeing the Gorgon's deadly face; and even this detail can be seen to reflect second-millennium Mesopotamian models, where the hero on the left is looking away. It seems that the iconography may have influenced the myth at this point.

In the Akkadian Gilgamesh epic it is not said that Humbaba was lethal to look upon, though 'his mouth is fire and his breath death'. In the Sumerian *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, however, 'if he looked at you, it was the regard of death!' Gilgamesh cuts off the ogre's head and takes it back as a trophy, as Perseus does with Medusa's.⁴⁹ Humbaba's head, like the Gorgon's, is commonly represented by itself, and serves as an apotropaic symbol. We cannot say that the myth of Perseus and the Gorgon derives from that of Gilgamesh and Humbaba, but there are certain similarities which may have laid a basis for convergence.

Two details of Perseus' equipment may be seen as orientalizing. First his *kibisis*. In literature, apart from Callimachus, this word seems to occur only with reference to Perseus' satchel. It must have been used in some early standard account of the myth. According to Hesychius it was a Cypriot dialect word; like many Cypriot dialect words it may be of Semitic origin.⁵⁰ Its use in this specific context suggests an East Mediterranean contribution to the story. Secondly Perseus' weapon. Pherecydes and others say that he beheaded the Gorgon with a *harpē* or sickle; vase-painters arm him with this implement also against the sea-monster. We have noted elsewhere (p. 291) that gods often attack their

down with a sickle in Mesopotamian art, and that an association may have been made between the Greek *harpē* and the West Semitic word for 'sword'.

Heban myths: Actaeon. The Seven

We now return to the later descendants of Kadmos. One of his daughters, Autonoe, was the mother of Actaeon, the unfortunate lad who wanted to marry his aunt Semele but was changed into a stag by Artemis and torn apart by his own hunting-hounds. It was long ago observed that one of Ishtar's mortal favourites suffered a parallel fate:

'You loved a shepherd, the herdsman, the chief one,
who constantly heaped up the embers for you
(and) slaughtered ewe-lambs for you daily.
[You st]ruck him and turned him into a wolf:
his own herd-boys were driving him away,
and his dogs were biting his thighs.'⁵¹

Here too the afflicted one is a mortal who is amorously entangled with a goddess, and it is a goddess's anger that is responsible for his transformation into an animal that his own dogs will attack.

Besides his several daughters Kadmos had one son, Polydorus, who became the grandfather of Laius and great-grandfather of Oedipus. It was the quarrel between Oedipus' sons, Eteocles and Polynices, that occasioned one of the two great wars of Greek mythology, the one commemorated in the slogan 'Seven against Thebes'.

Thebes was one of the great Mycenaean citadels. It would not be surprising if a memory of its historical destruction in the thirteenth century should have been preserved in poetic tradition. There was indeed a tradition about the fall of Thebes; only it is not associated with the Seven but with their sons, the Epigonoι. The more celebrated attack by the Seven was an attack that failed. Whether or not there is a genuine historical element in this, the classical form of the story has a distinctly mythical cast. Seven champions simultaneously assault the seven gates of the city, where each is faced by a matching champion and laid low. This is obviously an artificial scheme. It is unlikely that any Mycenaean citadel ever had seven gates. The principles of fortification were based on the restriction of access points to the minimum. The hill on which Thebes lies has only three natural approaches. The late Bronze Age city, in the view of archaeological experts, can have had only three or four gates. Even if there had been seven, what general, supposing he

⁴⁸ C. Hopkins, *AJA* 38, 1934, 341–58; Helck, 214 f.; Burkert (1987), 26–34; (1992), 85–7.

⁴⁹ *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (A) 122, 178 ff.; *Gilg.* II v 3 (= OBV Yale fr. iii 7), 17; V vi 13'.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pfeiffer on Call. fr. 531; Lewy, 91, compares Hebrew *qibṣ* 'gather'.

⁵¹ 'Hes.' fr. 217A, etc.; Gantz, 478–81; *Gilg.* VI 58–63, compared by Fries, 394.

happened to have precisely seven heroes at his disposal, would divide his forces equally between the gates instead of concentrating them at the weakest point of the defences?

The 'magic' number seven is in itself a pointer to oriental influence. In the Near East we actually find a mythical city with seven gates: the underworld. Its gates, to be sure, are not disposed round the perimeter but passed through successively.⁵² As to the seven heroes who attack Thebes—their names vary in different versions, but the number remains a constant—Walter Burkert has drawn attention to possible Babylonian prototypes.⁵³ In the first place he refers to the company of terrible demons known as the Seven, who act as assistants to the god of war and destruction, Nergal or Erra. They are introduced at length in the first tablet of *Erra and Ishum*, where they rouse Erra to action with a bellicose speech. They then march beside him as his fierce weapons when he goes and causes havoc in Babylon. But in the end he is appeased, and a revival of the city is prophesied. Burkert suggests that the Adrastus of the Greek myth, the Argive king who mounts the expedition against Thebes and whose name can be interpreted as 'the Inescapable', is the counterpart of Erra who commands the Seven.

He then makes more specific reference to an incantation text from the series entitled *Bit mēserī*, 'the house of enclosure (by protecting spirits)'. It describes a ritual for ridding a house of sickness. The Seven, representing the evil forces of disease, have been set up in effigy, with the image of Nergal at their heads. There are also plaster or asphalt images of 'twin fighters',⁵⁴ which are placed on each side of the sick person's head, in the middle of the doorway, and on each side of the door frames. There is an incantation addressed to 'the Seven before whom stands the image of Nergal', and then 'Seven gods who carry weapons' are called upon to destroy the enemy and to grant life. The images of the demons may have been destroyed and burned to complete the exorcism. I quote Burkert's summary of all this:

Seven terrible beings therefore are present, with the god of plague and death at their head; seven divine combatants are supposed to overcome the evil; and in addition there are the twins fighting each other in the doorway. The situation is uncannily close to that of the *Seven against Thebes* as known from Aeschylus: Seven evil and frightful assailants are enumerated, led by one whose name is 'inescapable'; seven armed heroes are pitted against them; and the decisive

⁵² Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite; cf. pp. 157, 298; H. W. Singor, *Hermes* 120, 1992, 404–11.

⁵³ In C. Brillante et al. (edd.), *I poemi epici rapsodici non omerici e la tradizione orale*, Padova 1981, 40–5; Burkert (1992), 106–14.

⁵⁴ The phrase *māši mundaḥḥi* means no more than this, not (as Burkert has been led to believe) 'twins fighting each other'.

battle is between the two brothers who are to fight and kill each other⁵⁵ at the seventh gate.

In the Greek myth, therefore, Burkert sees 'the epic transposition of a purification ritual of ultimately Babylonian origin'. He goes on to offer two hypotheses to explain how such a development might have come about. One is that at a time of pestilence an itinerant healer was brought in who knew some Babylonian rituals, and that his ministrations were somehow remembered in an epicized form. The other is that at eighth-century rebuilding on the site of the old Thebes seers were involved, men of the sort who introduced early Archaic Greece to oriental techniques such as hepatoscopy and foundation deposits. One of these practitioners of alien wisdom carried out a form of *bit mēserī* ritual to avert evil from the new foundation, and some poet remodelled the legends of the city's heroic past to provide the ritual with a basis in myth.

This is a brilliant construction, obviously speculative, but possibly hitting the nail somewhere near the head. In any case it seems necessary to place the formation of the myth of the seven gates and seven attackers at a period well after the fall of the Mycenaean citadel, when the topographical realities of the place had been forgotten and there were only ruins to see. That was the time, I have suggested, when the former occupants of the old citadel (*'armōn qadm*) and of ancient tombs received from Semitic immigrants the name of Qadmiyyīm, and the Kadmiicians, Kadmos, and Harmonia thus entered Greek mythology. Kadmiicians was the name used for the Thebans of old in the *Thebais*, the epic that told the story of the Seven and constituted the primary account of it for later poets.

The motif that Polynices and Eteocles killed each other in the fight by simultaneous blows has parallels in oriental art and literature. A ninth-century relief from Tell Halaf in northern Syria, capital of one of the 'Late Hittite' principalities, shows two men, identically portrayed and dressed, thrusting swords into each other's ribs while grasping each other's forelocks with their other hands. Eteocles and Polynices are similarly represented in Etruscan art from the early sixth century. The same configuration is described in the biblical narrative of the arranged combat between twelve selected young men from the army led by Abner and twelve from that led by Joab: 'and each man took hold of his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side, and they fell all together'.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Cf. the preceding note.

⁵⁶ Burkert (1992), 111 f.; 2 Sam. 2. 16. In 646 BC the Chaldaean leader Nabu-bel-shumate, realizing that his cause was lost and that he was about to fall into Assurbanipal's hands, ordered his

HERACLES

Argive and Theban saga come together in Heracles. He is born at Thebes, but descended from Perseus (grandfather of both Amphitryon and Alcmena), and the Argolid is the focus of many of his major exploits. He is a peculiar figure, occupying a unique place in Greek mythology. So many different stories are told about him, set in different regions; a dozen of them are linked up in the cycle of Labours—itself a singular construct—but there are numerous others that exist independently. He sails with the Argonauts, he sacks Troy, he is involved in the sack of Pylos; he has adventures in Euboea, in central Greece, in Arcadia, in Cos, he also roams far beyond Greece, to the land of the Amazons, into Scythia, across Europe to the Atlantic, and back by way of Africa, even to Hades. He takes up 227 out of the 1532 pages of Carl Robert's *Die griechische Heldensage*, and 90 out of the corresponding 571 pages of Timothy Gantz's *Early Greek Myth*. He must be an old popular hero, to whom new stories were easily attached or transferred from other protagonists. Within this heterogeneous mass of material, as in Greek mythology at large, we discern connections with eastern myth at various points

His birth and infancy

Heracles is often called the son of Zeus, and often the son of Amphitryon. The story of his conception is related fully in a fragment of the *Catalogue of Women* and another of the logographer Pherecydes.⁵⁷ Amphitryon, having killed Alcmena's father, agreed not to make love to her until he had taken vengeance on the Taphians and Teleboai for having killed her brothers. Before he returned from accomplishing this, Zeus came to her, impersonating Amphitryon, and slept with her. Amphitryon arrived back the same night, and lost no time in seeking her bed. In due course she gave birth to twins, Heracles and Iphicles, Zeus being the father of the former and Amphitryon of the latter.

This is, of course, only one of many myths about men born to a mortal mother by a divine father, but it differs from the ordinary run of them in that the woman is already married and the god deceives her by assuming the likeness of her husband. This is exactly paralleled in Egyptian royal propaganda concerning the birth of the Pharaoh as

shield-bearer to kill him, and 'he and his shield-bearer stabbed each other together with the iron swords on their belts' (Annals of Assurbanipal vii 28–37; Streck, 61). But there it was not a case of antagonists dispatching each other

⁵⁷ 'Hes' fr. 195 = *Scut.* 1–56, Pherecydes 3 F 13.

attested already in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵⁸ In the great mortuary temple at Deir el Bahri a series of reliefs, with accompanying inscriptions, present the story of the birth of Queen Hatshepsut, who reigned c.1479–1457. Following a decision in the council of the gods, Amun went at night to the royal palace in the likeness of the Pharaoh, Thutmose I, woke his queen Ahmose, and made love to her, after which he told her the name and destiny of the child she would bear. A similar series of representations at Luxor depicts the begetting of Amenophis III (c.1390–1352). Again Amun took the form of the reigning Pharaoh, Thutmose IV, and visited the sleeping queen to impregnate her. The Pharaohs who glorified themselves by means of these stories resided at the city which the Greeks (for reasons unknown) called Thebes. Whether this has anything to do with the location of Amphitryon's domicile and Heracles' birth at Boeotian Thebes must remain uncertain.⁵⁹

The story that Heracles was suckled by Hera can be put in the same context, since the Egyptian reliefs show the royal child being suckled by goddesses. We saw in chapter 3 (pp. 133 f.) that this was a common motif in the royal ideology of the ancient Near East, established in Mesopotamia from the third millennium and found at Ugarit in the second. However, it may be significant that Heracles, whose conception so closely matches those of the Egyptian monarchs, is the only man in Greek myth who is explicitly said to have been suckled by a goddess. Heracles is more vaguely said to have been 'reared' by Athena.

A more tenuous eastern parallel has been alleged for the tale that Heracles was cheated out of the empire that Zeus intended for him by the interference of Hera. On the day that Alcmena was due to give birth, Zeus announced to the gods that a man of his own stock was to be born that day who should rule over all the peoples round about. After making him confirm this with an oath, Hera rushed to Argos, brought on the birth of Eurystheus (another Perseid, and so of Zeus' stock), and held back that of Heracles, who consequently had to serve Eurystheus. Dornseiff compared the story of Esau and Jacob, those twin brothers who had fought in the womb and of whom Yahweh had prophesied to their mother Rebekah that the elder would serve the younger. She brought this about by tricking her husband Isaac. She made Jacob put on kid gloves and a kid cravat and so fooled the blind old man into thinking that this was the elder twin, the hairy hunter Esau. He gave him the blessing that con-

⁵⁸ A. Gayet, *Le temple de Louxor*, Paris 1894, 99; Dornseiff, 356; H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs*, Wiesbaden 1964, 214; W. Burkert, *Mus. Helv.* 22, 1965, 168 f.; Walcot, 66 f.; J. Assmann in J. Assmann, W. Burkert, and F. Stolz, *Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos. Drei orientalische Beispiele*, Fribourg 1982, 13–57; Burkert (1987), 40 n. 83.

⁵⁹ Burkert, *Mus. Helv.* 22, 1965, 168.

ferred power over the people and over his brothers, the blessing intended for Esau. Like Zeus, Isaac was appalled when he realized what had happened. Zeus reacted by throwing Ate out of heaven once and for all—an act closely paralleled in an Assyrian myth, as we have seen elsewhere (p. 390). Isaac, on the other hand, gave Esau a second-best blessing:

'Behold, away from the fat of the land shall be your dwelling
and away from the dew of the heavens on high.
According to your sword shall you live,
and you shall serve your brother;
but when you subdue(?) (him),
you shall tear off his yoke from your neck.'

This refers to future rebellion of Esau-Edom against Jacob-Israel; at the same time it is not inappropriate to Heracles' subjection to Eurystheus and the eventual throwing off of this domination by Heracles' sons.⁶⁰

The pattern common to both stories, then, is that the progenitor of two rivals is manoeuvred by his wife into unwittingly transferring the primacy intended for the firstborn to the other. The dispossessed one (a robust, outdoor man, good at killing wild animals) is left subordinate to the other and forced to serve him. But this subordination will not last forever; the time will come when he or his descendants will throw off the yoke and attain their freedom. In the biblical narrative this is foretold, in the Greek myth it is not.

While still a baby in his cot, Heracles was threatened by two snakes that Hera had sent to kill him. Giving the first display of his innate *savoir faire*, he grabbed them, one in each chubby hand, and throttled them. The scene is portrayed on Theban coins. It echoes a scene known from Mesopotamian seals, where a god or hero is shown grasping and apparently strangling a huge serpent in each hand. One such seal was found in the hoard discovered in 1963 in the Theban Kadmeia itself, though a level-headed person will attach no special importance to that.⁶¹

Individual exploits

Other Mesopotamian seals, going back well before 2000 BC, depict scenes strongly reminiscent of certain of Heracles' other achievements. We see divine or human heroes armed with a club and a bow, and

intentionally dressed in animal skins, even a lion-skin.⁶² We see heroes fighting bulls, lions, or birds. Most striking are representations of one or two figures fighting a many-headed (typically seven-headed) serpent or monster.⁶³

Variants of this theme are widespread in the ancient Near East. Sometimes the creature has flames rising from its back: this feature, which persists from third-millennium Mesopotamia to a neo-Hittite relief of the eleventh or tenth century, was no doubt an intrinsic part of its physical charms, but one wonders whether such depictions may not have inspired the Greek myth (attested in art from about 530) that Heracles and Iolaus used fire to overcome the Hydra. The slaying of a seven-headed serpent was one of the traditional exploits of Ninurta, to which we shall return presently. It also has a well-defined place in Canaanite mythology, where the beast is the Ugaritic *Ltn*, the biblical Leviathan (*l. lwyātān*), the dragon of the sea that is vanquished by the Storm-god (*Huul*, *Yahweh*).⁶⁴

A curious detail of the Hydra story is that as Heracles fought the reptile he was bitten in the foot by a crab. This alliance between serpent and crab is perhaps foreshadowed in a couple of the Mesopotamian seals. On one of the earliest the combat between the hero and the seven-headed serpent is framed by scorpions, one of which is located immediately behind the hero. A Neo-Assyrian seal of the ninth or eighth century shows a man aiming an arrow at a huge scorpion and snake which rear up vertically before him.⁶⁵

The absence of lions in historical Greece (cf. p. 246) is a strong pointer to the oriental provenance of the lion-slaying theme too. The defeat of a lion was a traditional heroic accomplishment in the Near East. Ninurta killed 'the Lion, the terror of the gods'. Enkidu and Gilgamesh killed lions routinely. Samson tore one asunder in his bare hands. Heracles too, according to the prevailing version, used only his bare hands in killing the Nemean Lion.⁶⁶

⁶² One seal of the Akkadian period shows a god with corn sprouting out of him, wearing a lion-skin and carrying a bow and a club: H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (as ch. 3, n. 182), 115 with pl. XXc.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 122 with pl. XXIIIj; A. M. Bisi, 'L'idra. Antecedenti figurativi orientali di un mito greco', in *Mélanges de Carthage* (Cahiers de Byrsa, 10), Paris 1964-5, 21-42; cf. G. R. Levy, *JHS* 54, 1934, 40-53; Helck, 217; Burkert (1979), 80-2; F. E. Brenk in D. Musti et al. (edd.), *La transizione dal miceneo all'alto arcaismo. Dal palazzo alla città*, Rome 1991, 512-16.

⁶⁴ See the references on p. 97. Where the number of the Hydra's heads is specified in Greek literature, it is nine, fifty, or a hundred. In art the tally is variable.

⁶⁵ Panyasis fr. 6 Bernabé = 3 Davies, *Hellenicus* 4 F 103, etc.; art from c.700; Gantz, 384-6; Burkert (1979), 80; Brenk, *op. cit.*, 513 f.

⁶⁶ Gudea A xxvi 7 (Jacobsen, 421); *Gilg.* Pennsylvania fr. iii 29, X i 34; Jdg. 14. 5 f., Gantz, 383 f.

⁶⁰ *JH* 19. 95-124; Gen. 27; Domseiff 235-8.

⁶¹ Astour, 392; Bernal, ii. 561; Burkert (1992), 87.

He subsequently wore its skin, as many poets and artists testify. In this too he may perhaps have a precedent in Gilgamesh, who is described in the epic as roaming the world after Enkidu's death clad in a *mašku* KAL-bim instead of his normal civilized clothes. The cuneiform sign KAL may represent either of the syllables *kal* or *lab* (among others), so that we cannot be sure whether the poet intended the skin (*mašku*) of a lion (*labim*), as usually translated, or of a dog (*kalbim*).⁶⁷ Two reliefs from Tell Halaf do show a hero wearing a lion-skin; another shows one grappling with a lion. Certain Pharaohs of the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties are represented wearing lion-skins and brandishing clubs.⁶⁸

Many of the Mesopotamian seals, from the third millennium to the first, show a hero fighting a huge bird, sometimes an ostrich, which he may strangle or attack with a sickle. An Assyrian seal of the ninth or eighth century depicts a god fighting a crowd of eagles or vultures. The theme has been compared with Heracles' expedition against the man-eating Stymphalian Birds, which he either frightened away with a rattle or killed, using his bow, his club, or a sling.⁶⁹

Another fierce bird which he shot was the eagle that tormented Prometheus. A distant precedent for this motif has been claimed in a scene portrayed on a seal of the Akkadian period. A god aims his bow at an eagle which is flying towards the Sun-god as if with hostile intent.⁷⁰

In a more conventional heroic context, Heracles is credited with the leading role in the sack of Pylos. He killed all but one of Neleus' twelve sons; the one who escaped was the youngest, Nestor, who happened to be away among the Gerenoi at the time. This is a motif paralleled in the biblical story of Abimelech, one of the seventy-one sons of Yerubbaal-Gideon. He hired a gang of ruffians and went and slew all but one of his seventy brothers. The youngest, Yotam, hid and escaped.⁷¹

Another family that Heracles destroyed was his own. In an access of madness he killed his wife Megara and his children by her, numbering in different sources two, three, five, or eight. In Euripides' tragedy on the subject, after he has shot one son and clubbed another, Megara flees into the house with the third and bars the doors, whereupon Heracles, imagining himself at the gates of Eurystheus' Mycene, uproots the

doorposts and brings the edifice crashing down upon them, killing them both. This corresponds to another famous feat of Samson, or rather two. At Gaza, after a visit to a prostitute, he avoids an ambush by uprooting the town gates, posts and all, and carrying them away. Later, after being captured by the Philistines and blinded, he pulls down the two central pillars of the building in which his enemies are celebrating and brings it crashing down, killing them by the thousand.⁷²

One of Heracles' more exotic triumphs consisted in acquiring the belt of the Amazon Hippolyte. To undo a woman's belt normally signifies a sexual conquest. But the word used in that context is *zōnē* or *zōnē*, whereas the word used for Hippolyte's belt is *zōstēr*, which is an article of armour, a metal-plated stomach-protector. It was given to her by Ares. For Heracles, therefore, it was a trophy of combat, not of love. In one version of the story he killed Hippolyte, and many Archaic vases show him fighting with Amazons. But in ordinary battle the victorious warrior takes his enemy's entire armour as his trophy. Why just the belt in the Amazon's case? The myth perhaps reflects the oriental practice of belt-wrestling, in which the aim was to strip the opponent of his belt. The sport is illustrated on Mesopotamian seals, in Sumerian statuettes, and in Middle Egyptian tomb-painting. In one representation the victor is holding up his antagonist's belt.⁷³

One group of Heracles' exploits takes place in the far west, beyond the Ocean: the capture of Geryon's cattle, the shouldering of the sky, which Atlas normally holds up, and the acquisition of the golden apples of the Hesperides. In order to cross the Ocean he availed himself of the Sun's vessel. This reminds us of Gilgamesh, who roamed the world to its furthest limit, attired in his dog- or lion-skin, found a wondrous garden with jewelled fruits presided over by a divine female, and crossed the sea at the world's end that no man had ever crossed before, only the Sun-god: as Siduri observes to him,

'Only the warrior Shamash has crossed the sea; who but Shamash can cross it?'⁷⁴

Like Heracles, Gilgamesh crosses in a special boat, the only one on those waters, though it does not belong to the Sun.

He was seeking eternal life, and he was actually given the plant of rejuvenation. This theme seems to be present in Heracles' western

⁶⁷ *Gilg.* VII iii 48, VIII ii 7; cf. Burkert (1987), 35 n. 24.

⁶⁸ M. von Oppenheim, *Tell Halaf. A New Culture in Oldest Mesopotamia*, London & New York 1937, 178 f. with pl. xxxvii B, and pl. xxiB; D. Wildung, *Sesostris und Amenemhet: Ägypten im Mittleren Reich*, Freiburg 1984, 40 ill. 33; Bernal, ii, 118.

⁶⁹ Frankfort, op. cit., 198 with pl. XXXIV c; Breck, op. cit., 509 n. 16 with literature; Gantz, 393 f.

⁷⁰ G. R. Levy, *JHS* 54, 1934, 46; Burkert (1979), 80; Breck, op. cit., 521 with fig. 11.

⁷¹ 'Hes.' fr. 34, 35. 6-9; Jdg. 9. 5. For the motif of the one brother who survives cf. 2 Ki. 11. 1-3.

⁷² Eur. *H.F.* 998-1000, cf. 864, 905 (there is no earthquake, as G. W. Bond supposes); Jdg. 16. 1, 25-30.

⁷³ Gantz, 397-400; P. E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan* ii (Archaeological Survey of Egypt), London 1893, pls. viii, xv; C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, Rome 1949, 57, 134.

⁷⁴ *Gilg.* X ii 23.

adventures too. The Hesperides' apples that grow on a special tree at the ends of the earth, guarded by a serpent, have always been seen as the fruit of immortality. This was 'the garden of the gods'; here Euripides locates their springs of ambrosia.⁷⁵ There is a clear analogy with the Garden of Eden, with its Tree of Life whose fruit Yahweh would not allow Adam to eat and its serpent which brought about his expulsion.⁷⁶ In the Greek myth there is never any suggestion that Heracles is seeking to obtain immortality or that the apples confer it. But there are, after all, other myths that associate him with the conquest of old age and death (wrestling with Geras and Thanatos, capturing Cerberus), and he does in the end enter Olympus as an immortal, married to the personification of youth, Hebe.

Another piece of business that Heracles performs in the west is to set up the two famous Pillars at the Straits of Gibraltar, supposedly marking the limit of human navigation. They are first mentioned in Pindar, and Herodotus treats them as a conventional geographical name for the Straits. Their exact location was disputed in antiquity. Posidonius, however, identified them with two great inscribed bronze pillars in the temple of Heracles (i.e. Melqart) at Cadiz, where sailors sacrificed to the god on successfully completing their long voyage. This may seem like a mean-minded rationalization of the myth, but it is in fact very plausible that it should have had its origin in an actual pair of pillars set up by Phoenicians to Melqart, whether at Cadiz or at some other landfall in the far west. Melqart, whom the Greeks always identified with Heracles, was a Tyrian god of mariners, first attested in the ninth century. Colonists carried him the length of the Mediterranean, to Cyprus, Malta, Carthage, Sardinia, and Spain. The twin pillars were characteristic of his cult. Herodotus saw them in the temple of 'Heracles' at Tyre, one of gold, the other of emerald.⁷⁷

Almost immediately after describing his visit to Tyre, Herodotus refers to the 'foolish' myth that when Heracles was in Egypt the Egyptians intended to sacrifice him to Zeus. They garlanded him as a victim and led him in procession. He went quietly, but on reaching the altar he suddenly burst his bonds and killed the lot of them. Once again a feat of Heracles' parallels one of Samson's. Until the secret of his hair is

uncovered, Samson repeatedly breaks all ligaments with which people attempt to bind him. When the Philistines capture him, they bind him in bronze fetters. Rejoicing at having caught him, they plan a great sacrifice to Dagon. As the feast is in progress, he exerts himself once more; it is not said explicitly that he breaks his bonds, but his arms are evidently free to push simultaneously at the two house-pillars. The building collapses and everyone is killed (including himself). We have already had occasion to cite this in connection with Euripides' *Hercules furens*.⁷⁸

The mighty one whom no man could defeat is undone by a woman, by his own wife or mistress: this too Heracles has in common with Samson.⁷⁹ Each of the two women is acting as the witting or unwitting agent of an enemy of the hero who is unable to overcome him directly. The circumstances, certainly, are very different. The detestable Delilah, in the pay of the Philistines, prises Samson's secret from him and betrays him to them, which leads directly to his death; the golden-hearted Delianira kills Heracles with a substance that the Centaur Nessus has given her and that he has led her to believe is a love-philtre, when it is in fact a lethal chemical.

Before Heracles dies he gives instructions for the burning of his body on a pyre in a special location, on the top of Mt. Oeta. The myth represents his apotheosis and corresponds to a cult practice, the bonfire on the summit for the now deified hero. As Burkert has written,

The complex of immolation and apotheosis recalls Near Eastern tradition, even if it remains a mystery how this came to be associated with the peak fire on Mount Oeta. At Tarsos in Cilicia a pyre is prepared every year for a god who is called Heracles in Greek and Sandes or Sardon in the local languages ... and the Hittite kings, as we learn, were made gods by extravagant cremation.⁸⁰

We also hear of a cremation of Heracles at Tyre, where the name should stand for Melqart.⁸¹

The cycle of Labours

We have seen that there are various, largely unrelated Near Eastern parallels and analogies for many of the individual exploits associated

⁷⁵ Pherecydes 3 F 16; Eur. *Hipp.* 742-51.

⁷⁶ B. Schweitzer, *Herakles*, Tübingen 1922, 134 n. 1, 135; Dornseiff, 217.

⁷⁷ Pind. *Ol.* 3. 44, *Nem.* 3. 21, *Isth.* 3/4. 30, fr. 256; Hdt. 2. 33. 3, 4. 8. 2, 42. 2-4, 43. 3, Posidonius (fr. 26 Theiler, 246 Edelstein-Kidd) ap. Strab. 3. 5. 5; Robertson Smith, 208, 211; H. Stahn, *Die Simsonsage*, Göttingen 1922, 57 f.; Dornseiff, 170-2, 361 f.; Brown, 115-24; Burkert (1985), 210; Hdt. 2. 44. 2 with A. B. Lloyd's commentary. For a pair of small pillars with bilingual dedications to Melqart (Punic) = Heracles (Greek) see KAI 47 (Malta, 2nd c. BC). On Melqart's possible rendering in Greek as Melikertes cf. p. 58.

⁷⁸ Hdt. 2. 45. 1, cf. Apollod. 2. 5. 11 (perhaps after Pherecydes, cf. *FGH Hist* 3 F 17) with Frazer, *Cantab.* 418; Jdg. 15. 12-16. 30; Dornseiff, 360 f.; Bernal, ii. 420 f.

⁷⁹ Dornseiff, 360.

⁸⁰ Burkert (1985), 210, cf. 63 (with 371 n. 71, adding [Luc.] *Amores* 1, 54); id. (1979), 82. The source for the Tarsus pyre is Dio Chrys. 33. 47 (i. 310. 26 Arnim); Sandes = Heracles, Berossus 680 ff. 12, Nonn. *D.* 34. 192, cf. *Lyd. Mag.* 3. 64. Hittite kings: cf. pp. 398 f.

⁸¹ Ps.-Clem. *Recogn.* 10. 24 (i. 1434 Migne) *Herculis sepulcrum apud Tyrum demonstratur, ubi igne crematus est*; cf. J. G. Frazer, *Adonis Attis Osiris*, 3rd ed., London 1914, i. 110-16; Brown, 120 f.

with Heracles. But a conspicuous and peculiar feature of the Heracles mythology is the organization of a long series of these exploits into a cycle or set, framed by the story of the hero's subjection to Euryatheia who imposed all these tasks on him. The motif of a king setting a hero a difficult task or tasks is by no means unique in Greek mythology; but they are normally limited to a sequence of three, as in the case of Bellerophon. A series of adventures can also be strung together as episodes of an extended journey, like that of the Argonauts, Odysseus, or Theseus. Heracles' own travels provided logographers such as Pherecydes with a narrative line on which many stories could be hung. But the cycle of twelve pre-programmed Labours, crowned with the prize of immortality, is something different. Is there any model for this in oriental myth?

We have seen that Samson parallels Heracles in several respects.⁸² Each is a man of unsurpassed strength, who kills a lion with his bare hands, who cannot be defeated in fight, who uproots gate-posts and pillars to bring a building crashing down on his enemies, who is taken captive but bursts his bonds and kills the entire company even as they are celebrating with a sacrifice, and whose death is in the end brought about by the wiles of his wife or mistress. Heracles has a divine father, and the same motif evidently underlies the story of Samson's birth.⁸³ His mother, married but childless, is visited by a Messenger of Yahweh and told that she is to bear a son who will begin to deliver Israel from the Philistine domination. The Messenger in this episode is clearly a cover for Yahweh himself; he declines to reveal his name 'because it is marvellous'; instead of accepting a meal on the spot he advises a burnt offering to Yahweh; he ascends to heaven in the altar flame; and Manoah, the husband, reacts by saying to his wife, 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God'. All that is missing is the explicit statement that it was the divine visitor who made the woman pregnant.

Another series of comparisons can be drawn with Gilgamesh.⁸⁴ He, like Heracles, has a divine parent (albeit a mother, not a father). He kills lions and (perhaps) wears a lion-skin to roam the world. He goes on a

journey to kill a monstrous opponent who occupies a certain forest. He is assisted in this by a comrade, as Heracles is assisted in some of his labours by Iolaus. By himself he goes to the world's end, where there is a wonderful gem-garden presided over by a divine female, and he crosses the waters that only the Sun normally crosses, seeking eternal life. He does not attain it, and his mortal life ends in the course of time; yet he has divine status, and can be appealed to for deliverance from evil.⁸⁵

To account for these series of parallels we may suppose that on more than one occasion a complex of stories about a legendary strong man came to Greece from the Near East and was attached to the obvious Greek candidate, Heracles. However, this does not answer our question about the formal cycle of Labours. Can we find in the orient a model for the idea of a hero whose achievements are regarded as making up a set?

A promising case has recently been identified in the Sumerian myth of the trophies of the god Ninurta.⁸⁶ Ninurta is a vigorous champion, a son of the chief god Enlil; indeed, an Akkadian text (KAR 76. 9) calls him *aplu dannu ša Enlil*, 'the strong son of Enlil', paralleling the formula used of Heracles, *Αἰδὸς ἀλκιμὸς υἱός*, 'the doughty son of Zeus'. In a series of Sumerian texts, starting with the Cylinders of Gudea in the 22nd century and continuing with the narrative poems *Lugal-e* and *An-gim*, there are references to a series of monsters, each one different, which Ninġirsu or Ninurta has killed or captured in separate combats and brought back to his city as trophies. In the Gudea inscription, which celebrates Gudea's restoration of Ninġirsu's temple Eninnu at the city of Ġirsu, they are called the Slain Warriors; there are eleven of them, and we are told where in the building Gudea had each of them represented. As translated by Thorkild Jacobsen, they are: the Six-headed Buck; the Radiant Head; the Seven-headed Lion; the Basilisk; the Palm-tree; the Bison's Head; the Lion, the terror of the gods; the Kulianna; the Copper; the Magilum boat; and the Bison.⁸⁷ In *Lugal-e*, an epic account of

⁸² Cf. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, 775. Heracles in Greek popular religion was above all Alexikakos, the averter of evil.

⁸³ J. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LAM-bi NIR-ĠAL. Le récit épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta, du Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création*, Leyden 1983, i. 11, 15, 17-19; Burkert (1987), 14-19, and in C. Bonnet and C. Jourdain-Annequin (edd.), *Héraclès. D'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée. Bilan et perspectives*, Brussels & Rome 1992, 121-4; F. E. Bronk (as n. 63), 507-26.

⁸⁴ Gudea A xxv 22-xxvi 19; Jacobsen, 420 f.; cf. J. A. Black, *Bulletin of the Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 15, 1988, 19-25. According to Black the six-headed animal is a wild ram, and the seven-headed 'lion' is an error for a snake. The Kulianna may be a mermaid. 'The Copper' refers to the metal, not a policeman. It may have been a temple gong that was given mythical credentials as having been dug out of the earth by the god himself. (Similarly the Gypsum in the *Lugal-e* list may stand for some cult object or temple ornament.) The Magil(l)um is a seagoing cargo vessel. As Black shows, there is evidence that at least some of the Slain Warriors had been objects of cult at Ġirsu for some two hundred years before Gudea.

⁸² Cf. H. Steinthal, *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 2, 1862, 129-78 (an English version of this article appears in I. Goldziher [trs. R. Martineau], *Mythology among the Hebrews and its Historical Development*, London 1877, 392-446); A. Jeremias in Roscher, ii. 821 n.; Stahn, *Die Simsonsage* (as n. 77); Dornseiff, 351-63, 'Ist Herakles ein griechischer Simson?' Some of Dornseiff's points are extremely weak. The two heroes were already compared in antiquity: Eus. *PE* 10. 9. 7 and *Chron.* ii. 54 Schoene; Aug. *De civ. dei* 18. 19; Filastrius, *Haer.* 8 (xii. 1122 Migne); *Chron. Paschale* p. 153 Dindorf.

⁸³ Jdg. 13. 2-25; Dornseiff, 355-8.

⁸⁴ Cf. A. Jeremias in Roscher, ii. 821-3 (where 'Izdubar' is Gilgamesh, whose name was once erroneously so read); B. Schweitzer, *Herakles*, 135-8; B. C. Brundage, *JNES* 17, 1958, 226-8.

Ninurta's battle against the Azag (cf. p. 301), the god's mace *Shar-ru* ('Smasher of Thousands') recites to him the catalogue of his Slain Warriors:

The Kulianna, the Basilisk, the Gypsum,
the 'Strong Copper', the warrior 'Six-headed Buck',
Magilum, the lord 'Heaven's Hobble',
the Bison, king Date-palm,
the Thunderbird, and the 'Seven-headed Serpent'
you verily slew, (o) Ninurta, in the highland.⁸⁸

Here again the tally is eleven,⁸⁹ but there are some differences from Gudea's list. In the shorter poem *An-gim*, in which Ninurta is shown returning in triumph to Nippur after defeating the Mountain (cf. p. 355), his trophies are first listed in a hymnic recital, with an indication of where each one was won (mountainous regions, mostly), and then again in the description of his journey, each of them being attached to a different part of his battle-wagon.⁹⁰ Two of those specified in *Lugal-e*, 'Heaven's Hobble' (or Lord 'Saman-ana, as others render it) and the Date-palm, are here absent, but the number is made up by two items apparently acquired in the recent conflict: some captured bulls and some captured cows. It seems that the number was supposed to be eleven, even though the details were not constant. Several other texts contain allusions to Ninurta's trophies. Two sources refer to his victory over a creature generally taken to be a crab, which he trampled in a tide-pool.⁹¹

The assemblage of conquests and trophies was taken over by other gods of war. At Babylon they were taken over by Marduk: they were represented on his temples, above all on the doors of the great temple Esagila, and mentioned in hymns. In *Enūma eliš* they are transmuted into the eleven monsters created to assist Tiamat and defeated by Marduk in a single battle. Here they include, besides several kinds of serpent, a lion-demon, a lion-man, a scorpion-man, a fish-man, and a bull-man. In Assurbanipal's acrostic hymn some of these are listed beside the bird-demon Anzu among Marduk's conquests.⁹² In Assyria Marduk's victories became Aššur's.

⁸⁸ *Lugal-e* 129-34; van Dijk, op. cit., i. 68 f.; Black, op. cit., 23; Jacobsen, 243, whose version I have quoted, Bottéro-Kramer, 345.

⁸⁹ Or twelve, if 'the warrior' is an independent item, as some take it. If not, the Azag might be counted as a twelfth; but it was not brought back as a trophy.

⁹⁰ *An-gim* 26(?) - 62; Bottéro-Kramer, 378 f.

⁹¹ J. S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (as ch. 7, n. 31), Rome 1978, 141-54; van Dijk, op. cit., 10-19; Breck, op. cit., 507-10.

⁹² *En. el.* I 141-3 etc.; *CPLM* no. 2 obv. 15 f. (Seux, 117; Foster, 721); cf. Black, op. cit., 25.

Among the creatures killed by Ninurta (or whoever) we can certainly recognize some analogies with the objects of Heracles' Labours.⁹³ The seven-headed serpent is the most unmistakable. There is also a terrible lion, corresponding to the Nemean Lion; a 'buck', which some take as a stag, others as a ram, and which might be matched up with the Cerynean Hind; the storm-bird Anzu, which could at a pinch be put beside the Nymphalians Birds; a crab(?) that is trampled underfoot in a pool, recalling the crab that assists the Hydra against Heracles; and a 'bison', pictured as a bull-man (as described on p. 452), which is slain 'in the middle of the sea'⁹⁴ and might be compared with the Cretan Bull. (Was this once a Minotaur?) The captured bulls and cows that Ninurta adds to his dead trophies in *An-gim* and brings back to Nippur may be put beside the cattle of Geryon.

We are hampered in making these comparisons by not having access to any narrative accounts of Ninurta's struggles with the trophy-creatures, except for Anzu. But the connection with Heracles is strengthened by the fact that in most cases the Greek hero takes the object of his quest back to Eurystheus at Tiryns, as Ninurta takes all of his trophies back to Nippur. The Cerynean Hind, the Erymanthian Boar, the Cretan Bull, the mares of Diomedes, Hippolyte's belt, Geryon's cattle, the Hesperides' apples, and Cerberus are all brought back to Tiryns. Even from the first two Labours, in which a monster is killed, Heracles takes something as a trophy: from the Lion its skin, and from the Hydra its gall.

The correspondence would be still more striking if the canonical number of Heracles' Labours, twelve, were matched by that of Ninurta's trophies. Burkert indeed claims that they are; but so far as I can see, the number is consistently eleven in the Mesopotamian texts.⁹⁵ It has to be admitted that we do not know how early the number twelve became fixed in the Greek tradition, and it is possible that an older version existed with fewer Labours.⁹⁶

Attempts have also been made to account for the number twelve by giving the myth an astronomical interpretation. Allegorists in later

⁹³ Van Dijk, Burkert, Breck, as in n. 86. Van Dijk (17 f.) surely goes too far in finding equivalences for all twelve Labours.

⁹⁴ *Anzu* I 12.

⁹⁵ Cf. W. G. Lambert in *Keilschriftliche Literaturen (XXXII) Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, Berlin 1986, 57 f.

⁹⁶ The metopes on the temple of Zeus at Olympia (c. 460) provide the first clear evidence for the series of twelve, though there is some likelihood that it was already established in Pisander's epic *Heraclea* (seventh or sixth century). In comparisons of Heracles with Gilgamesh it has sometimes been seen as significant that the Gilgamesh epic (in its standard form) occupies twelve tablets (e.g. H. Schweitzer, *Heracles*, 137 n. 2). But this division is accidental, and there is no correspondence of tablets to adventures.

antiquity explained it as representing the victorious march of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac.⁹⁷ Certain of the creatures overcome by Heracles, such as the Lion, the Bull, and the Crab correspond well enough to zodiacal constellations.⁹⁸ The majority, however, do not. And there is a more serious historical objection. The zodiac is not, as is sometimes imagined, a construct of immemorial antiquity. It does not seem to have existed in Babylonian astronomy before the sixth or fifth century, and it is unlikely that the Greeks had any concept of it until somewhat later. But the myth of a set of Labours that Heracles had to perform for Eurystheus was certainly in existence before Hesiod, even if they were not originally twelve in number. It seems out of the question that they could have been correlated with the signs of the zodiac before the fifth century at the earliest, and the correlation is not in fact documented until much later.

If the Sun-god's progress through the year fails to provide a key, what about his progress through the hours of the night? Here Egyptian eschatology offers a possible model. Funerary texts current from the middle of the second millennium to the Ptolemaic period, the *Amduat* ('What is in the Duat') and the *Book of Gates*, provide detailed information about the nocturnal passage of the Sun-god, Re', through the Duat, that is, the underworld.⁹⁹ He travels in his boat, which is rowed, towed, or propelled by spells. The way is divided into twelve sectors, corresponding to the twelve hours of night. Each sector is illuminated for an hour as Re' passes through it, but otherwise dark. Each is peopled by strange denizens: by gods, many of whom are evidently the deified dead, and by monsters and serpents, some of which are winged or have two or three heads. There is one particular serpent, Apophis, who is hostile to Re' and who has to be subdued and bound on Re's behalf. Re' re-emerges into the sky after passing through the body and out of the mouth of another great serpent, located in the twelfth sector.

While most of the dead were confined in the Duat, exposed to torments and punishments by pits of fire, devouring monsters, and so forth, and enjoying but a single hour of light and joy each night as Re' passed by, it was also possible to attain a more blessed lot after death. With the esoteric knowledge provided by the *Amduat* or the *Book of*

Gates, the deceased might join Re's entourage at the western horizon, travel with him through all twelve sectors of the Duat, and rise with him to heaven. He would live on as a companion of Re', wearing similar apparel to his, eating of his food, and partaking in his divinity. Each night he would accompany him again through the Duat, revisiting the brightened dead.

The Sun-god's and the soul's adventures in the Duat show little correspondence in detail with those of Heracles and cannot be their source. But the overall scheme is curiously similar: a series of twelve episodes involving deadly serpents and other monsters, leading ultimately to immortality and feasting with the gods.

There are further suggestive points. As the Egyptian's soul travels in the Sun-god's boat along the stream that connects sunset and sunrise, so Heracles in his tenth Labour embarks on the Sun's bowl-shaped vessel at sunset and crosses Oceanus in it to kill the three-headed monster Geryon and his two-headed dog Orthos. In his final Labour he masters Cerberus, the many-headed Hound of Hell who devours those who try to escape from Hades. Cerberus may be compared with the monster in the Egyptian underworld called 'm-myt, that is 'Eater of the Dead', whose front part is like a crocodile, her middle like a lion, and her hind quarters like a hippopotamus. In the Theban recension of the *Book of the Dead* she squats by the scales on which the soul is weighed and devours all those that are burdened with any guilt. Of the pure soul the gods report to Thoth:

He hath not committed any sin, and he hath done no evil against us. The devourer 'm-myt shall not be permitted to prevail over him. Meat offerings and admittance into the presence of the god Osiris shall be granted unto him, together with an abiding habitation in the Field of Offerings, as unto the followers of Horus.¹⁰⁰

Heracles' victory over Cerberus, therefore, might be seen as analogous to the Egyptian soul's acquittal and admission to eternal life.

It is time to sum up. Heracles was most probably a Greek hero in origin. His name is problematic, but apparently related to that of Hera, the goddess with whom he is so intimately bound up in the myths, and to the word *hērās*, 'hero'.¹⁰¹ There is a possibility that these names derive from the root *yēr- meaning 'year'. But if Heracles was once some sort of year-spirit, that is sunk in the distant past. His mythology is on the

⁹⁷ See West (1983), 192 f. This interpretation has been taken up in modern times by C. F. Dupuis (*Origine de tous les cultes*, 1795) and others. Cf. Schweitzer, loc. cit.; Dornseiff, 353 f., 358 f.

⁹⁸ Callimachus' story (fr. 54) that Heracles took just thirty days over the Lion expedition also fitted nicely (Dornseiff, 358 f.).

⁹⁹ Translations in E. Hornung, *Ägyptische Unterweltbücher*, Zürich & München, 2nd ed., 1984, cf. H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin 1952, 17–20, 589 f.; E. Hornung in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* i, Wiesbaden 1975, 184–8.

¹⁰⁰ Ch. 30B, trs. E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, London 1913, 373 f., cf. 198 f.

¹⁰¹ I cannot see that there is much to be said in favour of the suggestion that Heracles' name is a Hellenized form of Eragal, another name of the Babylonian underworld god Nergal (Schretter, 170 f.; cf. Burkert [1979], 82). The figures have too little in common.

whole that of an itinerant vanquisher of opponents, divine, human, or monstrous. It is a mass of unconnected episodes, some of which paralleled in the myths of Gilgamesh or Samson, may have been of oriental provenance.

But within the mass we find an organized set of twelve adventures unified under the rubric of Labours performed at the behest of Eurystheus. This unifying factor is a theme familiar in Greek myth, that of the king who sets a hero a series of tasks. But the length of the series is exceptional and does not fit the usual pattern of such stories.

We have identified two systems in Near Eastern mythology which have enough in common with the Labours to raise the suspicion that they have contributed something to the scheme: the traditional set of eleven trophies, mostly carcasses, which Ninurta (or Marduk, or Aššur) brought back to his temple from various combats, just as Heracles brought a series of fabulous creatures back to Tiryns from his Labours; and the succession of twelve monster-infested regions which the Egyptian Sun-god and his entourage must make their way through in order to attain to heaven and the condition of the gods. Clearly these two systems had nothing whatever to do with one another. Can we suppose that both independently influenced the Heracles myth? It is a complex and puzzling situation which we are not at present able to resolve.

Before we leave it, there is one further complication that had better be mentioned. There is no justification for interpreting Heracles as the sun or for labelling him a solar hero. But Samson, with whom he has the similarities we have noted, is marked out by his name as 'the Solar one': *Šimšôn* is formed from *šēmeš* 'sun', with the common suffix *-ôn*. It has been strenuously argued that he is a degraded Canaanite sun-god.¹⁰² Many mythical personages have been so interpreted in the past; but Samson at least has his name in favour of it.

THE TANTALIDS

Besides Danaus and Kadmos, Greek mythology knows of another founder of a dynasty who came to Greece from the east, this time from Anatolia: Pelops, the son of Tantalus, who belonged at Sipylus in Lydia. The most famous myth about Pelops concerns his chariot race against Oenomaus in order to win the latter's daughter, Hippodameia. All who sought her hand had to race against her father, and their lives were forfeit if they lost. Many before Pelops had ventured it and perished. But

Hippodameia liked the look of him and ensured his victory by underhand means. She persuaded Oenomaus' mechanic, Myrtilus, to sabotage his chariot by removing the linchpins, or substituting wax ones. The wheels came off in the race and Oenomaus crashed. Pelops departed with Hippodameia and Myrtilus, but presently disposed of the latter by throwing him into the sea. As he fell he laid a curse on Pelops' family.

Pelops established himself in the Peloponnese, which took its name from him. His two principal sons were Atreus and Thyestes. Between them arose a tragic feud. A golden lamb was found in Atreus' flocks, and on the strength of it he claimed the kingship. But Thyestes got possession of it after seducing Atreus' wife. He declared that the throne was now his and that he would not give it up so long as the sun continued to follow its daily course. Zeus, however, thwarted him by changing or reversing the sun's motion—whether permanently or only temporarily is a point on which the authorities are at variance. Atreus now took over the reins of power. He killed Thyestes' children and served them to him for dinner in a stew. (Some say that it was in horror at this that the sun changed direction.)

The effects of Myrtilus' curse continued in the next generation. Thyestes' surviving son Aegisthus seduced Clytaemestra, the wife of Atreus' son Agamemnon, while Agamemnon was away conquering Troy, and on his return they murdered him. Aegisthus then took over the kingship until, years later, he was killed in his turn by Agamemnon's son.

The name Myrtilus, which appears at an early stage of this saga, is at home in Anatolia. Mursili was the name of three Hittite kings between the late seventeenth and the thirteenth century. Mursilos was a common name in Lydia, and one of the names by which Candaules was known to the Greeks.¹⁰³ We also find it in Lesbos, as the name of a tyrant in Alcæus' time and as that of a Hellenistic historian; in the latter's case it is sometimes written as Myrtilos.

The myth of Tantalus, Pelops, and their descendants was current among the Asiatic Aeolians from an early period,¹⁰⁴ and it might be thought that for Oenomaus' chariot-man someone simply chose at random a name common in that part of the world. The echo of Hittite royal history, however, might be more than accidental. Some have suspected that 'Tantalus' is another Hittite royal name, Tudhaliyas, which is highly uncertain but not impossible. It has also been suggested that the story of Agamemnon's murder by his wife and her lover is a

¹⁰² H. Stahn (as n. 82).

¹⁰³ Hdt. I. 7. 2; cf. J. A. S. Evans, *GRBS* 26, 1985, 229–33.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. West (1985), 158.

reflection of the historical assassination of a Hittite king—none other than the first Mursili—which inaugurated a terrible tale of bloodshed in the royal house.

The events are related in an edict of the king Telibinu, whose reign occupied roughly the last quarter of the sixteenth century. He tells how under Labarna, Hattusili, and Mursili the kingdom had been united and had grown to greatness. Here is what he has to say about Mursili:¹⁰⁵

When Mursilis reigned in Hattusa, his sons, his brothers, his in-laws, his kinsmen, and his troops were united. The enemies' land he held subdued under a (strong) arm, and he wore their land down, and made them border the sea.

He went to Halpa, and destroyed Halpa, and brought Halpa's captives (and) its booty to Hattusa. Subsequently he went to Babylon, and destroyed Babylon; he defeated the Hurrian [troops]. He [sent] Babylon's captives (and) its booty to Hat[tusa].

Hantili was his cupbearer, and he had Har[apsi]li, Mursili's wife(?), as his wife. Zidanta was a [], and he had [], Hantili's daughter, as his wife [And Z]idanta slunk up to Hantili, and they [did] an evil thing: they killed Mursili, [and] did a blood(-deed).

What follows is rather fragmentary. It appears that Hantili was afraid for his life, but the army protected him and he was able to consolidate his power. Telibinu observes, however, that 'the gods demanded (atonement for) the blood [of Mursili]'. Hantili grew old and died a natural death, but his son Piseni and Piseni's sons were murdered by his friend Zidanta, who seized the throne for himself. 'And the gods demanded (atonement for) the blood of Piseni.'

Zidanta was killed by his own son, Ammuna, who became king in his father's place. 'And the gods demanded (atonement for) the blood of his father Zidanta.' Crops and livestock did not flourish under Ammuna's hand; many of the southern provinces turned hostile, and his armies fared ill in battle. On his death the chief of the royal bodyguard, Zuru, arranged the murders of the princes Titia and Hantili and their sons. One Huzziya now became king. He was planning to dispose of his sister Istapariya and her husband Telibinu (the author of the record), but the matter came to light, and Telibinu was able to drive Huzziya and his brothers out.

Telibinu's wife Istapariya and his son Ammuna now died, it is not clear how. The diviners pronounced sagely, 'Behold, bloodshed has become rife in Hattusa.' Telibinu decided it was time to declare the

murder of princes unconstitutional and to formulate a clear law of succession. He admonishes future kings to desist from killing anyone of their family: 'it is not good'. If any king plots evil against his brother or sister, he should be spoken to by his council and told: 'Read this tale of blood on the tablet. Formerly bloodshed was great in Hattusa, and the gods took (it out) on the royal family.'

Here, then, in sixteenth-century Hatti we find a saga of murdered kings and royal children, extending over some three generations, each one provoking or fulfilling a divine demand for retribution until a halt is called and legislation put in place. The story has been set down as a lesson to be brought to the attention of future kings.

This is the nearest the ancient orient has to offer to the Greek myth of the Tantalids. There is at any rate a general similarity, and we have noticed that the Greek myth contains one name, Myrtilus, which resembles that of one of the kings in the Hittite story, and another, Tantalus, which might also derive from a Hittite king.

A more specific parallel has been claimed between Mursili's fate and Agamemnon's.¹⁰⁶ Mursili, after returning victorious from the sack of Babylon, is murdered by a man who, according to the text as written, 'had Har[apsi]li, Mursili's wife, as his wife'. This has been taken to mean that Hantili was the queen's lover. The parallel with Aegisthus, who is the lover of the queen and kills the king as he returns victorious from the sack of a great city in a distant land, then appears striking indeed. But firstly the text gives no indication of the interval separating Mursili's sack of Babylon from his death: it may have been many years. Secondly, 'wife' in the phrase 'Mursili's wife' is written with the Sumerogram DAM, and this may easily be a mistake for the very similar sign NIN, 'sister', as most scholars assume; the same error occurs elsewhere in Hittite texts.¹⁰⁷ Thirdly, Mursili's wife is elsewhere named as Kali.¹⁰⁸ There is no suggestion that she was implicated in the murder. Hantili has a male accomplice. He is not killed in his turn by Mursili's son or anyone else, but dies a natural death. There is no son who murders his mother, though there is one who murders his father. Children are killed but not castrated.

Nor are there any reversals of the sun's motion. But that at least is an oriental motif. In 701 BC, so we are told, Yahweh made the sun go backwards in the sky as a sign to Hezekiah.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ F. Cornelius, *Afo* 17, 1954-6, 302; Astour, 111 n. 3.

¹⁰⁷ See Eisele, *op. cit.*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ O. R. Gurney in *CAH* ii(1), 659 n. 1.

¹⁰⁹ 2 Ki. 20, 8-11. Cf. above, p. 357 on II. 2. 411-18.

¹⁰⁵ *KBo* iii. 1 + 68, *KUB* xi. 1 (CTH 19); W. Eisele, *Der Telipinu-Erlass*, Diss. Munich 1970, 20-2.

Phaethon

Another myth in which the sun's ordinary course is upset is that of Phaethon. This son of Helios attempts to drive his father's chariot, but his ambition outstrips his skill. Zeus has to intervene with a thunderbolt dashing him down to earth, dead. Many have seen a parallel in a famous passage of Isaiah:

How you are fallen from the heavens, Shining One, son of Dawn!
 You are broken on the ground, who were the vanquisher of nations.
 For you said in your heart 'I will go up to the heavens;
 above the stars of El I will set up my throne,
 and sit on the mountain of convocation in the recesses of the north;
 I will go up on the backs of the clouds;
 I will become like the Most High ('Elyôn).'
 Yet you have gone down to Sheol, to the recesses of the Pit.¹¹⁰

The fall of the oriental king is here allegorized in terms of what looks like a pre-existing myth about a Shining One (*Hēlēl*), son of Dawn, who aimed to occupy the highest position in heaven but was struck down. There are strong echoes of earlier Canaanite mythology in the references to the 'mountain of convocation' in the north (cf. p. 112) and the divine names Šāhār (Dawn), El, and 'Elyôn. A god *Hil* is also attested in Ugaritic texts, where he is doubtfully understood as the New Moon.¹¹¹ The root *hil* means 'shine, be bright', and *Hēlēl* corresponds in meaning exactly to the Greek Phaethon.¹¹²

In the *Theogony* Phaethon too is called the son of the Dawn, his father being Cephalus.¹¹³ In this version he is carried off by Aphrodite to become her temple servant, and the fall from heaven does not appear. But it is hard to believe that Phaethon the son of Dawn and Phaethon the son of Helios were not originally one and the same. Another link can be found between them besides their celestial parentage. It is probable that

¹¹⁰ Isa. 14. 12-15 (on the authenticity of the passage cf. above, pp. 435 f. with n. 60); O. Gruppe, *PhW* 3, 1883, 1539 f.; id., *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte*, ii. 943; H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, Göttingen 1895, 132-4; P. Grelot, *RHR* 149, 1956 18-48; Baumgartner, 157 f.; Astour, 268-70; J. W. McKay, *Vetus Testamentum* 20, 1970, 451-64.

¹¹¹ *KTU* 1. 17 ii 27, 24. 6, 41. In these passages the Kotharatu, the goddesses of birth, are formulaically called the daughters of *Hil*; in the last passage he is called *b7 gml*, 'lord of the *gml*', which possibly means 'sickle' (Akk. *gamlu*). The New Moon interpretation is based on this and on Arabic *hilāl* 'crescent moon'.

¹¹² Its partial resemblance to the Greek *Hēlios* is, of course, entirely fortuitous.

¹¹³ Hes. *Th.* 986-91.

the river Eridanus, where the son of Helios fell, was originally the Attic stream of that name, and that the poplars into which his weeping sisters were transmuted were those of a known Greek landscape. But it was from the same region, from Hymettus, that Cephalus was carried off to be the husband of Dawn. Both Phaethons, then, can be traced to local Attic mythology.¹¹⁴

The Shining One was later understood to be the Morning Star (LXX *ἑωσφόρος*, Vulg. *Lucifer*), but it is not clear that this was the sense of the original myth. Hesiod makes Dawn the mother of the Morning Star, but also of the stars in general. In later Jewish apocalyptic there are references to stars which have been thrown out of heaven and now burn in bondage for having transgressed the Lord's ordinances and not come out at their proper times.¹¹⁵ Myths of stars or Shining Ones thrown down from heaven in flames would have their most obvious origin in the common phenomenon of the meteor or 'falling star'. We have seen elsewhere evidence for the motif of a god being thrown out of heaven (p. 190) and for that of a meteor being interpreted as the descent of a god to earth (pp. 358 f.).

Irrespective of all astral connotations, the basic theme of the arrogant intruder in heaven who threatens the established divine order but is defeated by the chief god or the Storm-god is a familiar one in Near Eastern and Greek mythology. The myth of the Shining One would seem to have been a particular Canaanite version of it which has undergone further modifications in Greece.

Ganymede

Greek mythology knows of other earthlings who travelled through heaven in one way or another. Some, such as Bellerophon and Icarus, provided their own transport, but came to grief because their flights had not been authorized by the great control tower in the sky. Others were wanted and fetched—taken up to heaven and never seen again. Biblical and Sumerian parallels for this motif have been cited in an earlier chapter (p. 122).

In most cases it is said simply that the gods, or a particular god or goddess, or the Harpies or storm-winds, snatched the chosen one up and made off with him. Where the winds are involved we are reminded of the story of Elijah, who went up to heaven in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire. The prophets at Jericho offer to send out a search party, 'in case

¹¹⁴ O. Gruppe, *PhW* 3, 1883, 1540.

¹¹⁵ Hes. *Th.* 381 f.; *1 Enoch* 18. 13-16, 21. 3-6, cf. 86-8, 90. 20-4. In the *Apocalypse of Elijah* 3. 28 the Antichrist is reminded 'You fell from heaven like the morning stars' (p. 769 Sparks).

the wind of Yahweh has lifted him up and thrown him down on one of the mountains or valleys'. Fifty men went out and searched the country for three days, without result.¹¹⁶

Ganymede too, in the earliest sources, is said to have been snatched up by the gods or by Zeus. But later authors and artists (after the fourth century) represent him as taken up to heaven by Zeus' eagle, or by Zeus in the form of an eagle. It seems possible that this version was influenced by the old Mesopotamian myth of the man whom an eagle took up to heaven, Etana.¹¹⁷ We know that the story was popular from the third millennium to the first, from the early seals depicting Etana's flight and from the *Etana* manuscripts of different periods. There is even an echo of it in a Greek author of the third century AD, who reports a Babylonian story about the birth of 'Gilgames', that is, Gilgamesh. The king was told that a child born to his daughter would deprive him of his throne. He therefore kept her under close guard; but she became pregnant by some unknown man. The guards, fearing the king's wrath, hurled the baby from 'the acropolis', where the mother was being held. But he was intercepted in his fall by an eagle, which carried him on its back to a safe place, a garden. The gardener, finding the bonny infant, brought him up, and he became king of the Babylonians.¹¹⁸ This is a remarkable synthesis of genuine Babylonian and Greek story motifs. The birth legends of Sargon (above, pp. 439 f.), Cyrus, and Perseus as well as the death of Astyanax seem to have contributed to it. The eagle ride may reasonably be connected with the Etana tradition, for in *Etana* too the hero falls and is caught by the eagle flying underneath him. There is no historical objection to deriving the Ganymede story from the same line of tradition. However, there are significant differences between the Etana and Ganymede myths. Etana does not stay in heaven, and he rides on the eagle's back, whereas Ganymede is thought of as gripped in the bird's talons.

Phrixus and the Golden Fleece

Orchomenos in Boeotia was afflicted by a crop failure. Athamas, the king, was told that to remedy the situation he must sacrifice his son Phrixus. He led him to the altar, but suddenly, by the agency of Phrixus' mother Nephele, a ram with a golden fleece appeared. Nephele set Phrixus and his sister Helle on the ram's back, and it carried them off. It flew over land and sea, crossed the Hellespont (where Helle fell off and

drowned, leaving her name to those waters), and brought Phrixus to Colchis. There he sacrificed his animal benefactor and presented the golden fleece to Aietes, who set it up on a tree in the grove of Ares. This was the article that Jason later obtained with Medea's help and took back to Iolcus, Pelias having promised him the kingship if he succeeded in doing so.

The ram that suddenly appeared when the king's son was on the point of being sacrificed must originally have been not a means of transport to a cheerier scene but a substitute victim. Its slaughter is displaced to Colchis. The substitution of an animal for a human sacrifice is a common theme in cult aetiologies.¹¹⁹ It is familiar from the myth of Iphigeneia, who vanished from the altar to be replaced by a deer. It is paralleled in the Old Testament story of Abraham's sacrifice of his only son Isaac. Just as he is about to put the knife in, a voice from heaven tells him to stop. At the same moment he sees a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, and he sacrifices that instead of his son.¹²⁰

We have already met a golden lamb as a talisman of kingship in the story of Atreus and Thyestes. But what of the fleece suspended in a holy grove?

In certain Hittite rituals the fleece of a sheep or ram played a prominent role.¹²¹ In the texts it is often designated as a divine object by means of the divine determinative. Although not described as golden, it might be decorated with sun-discs. (Aietes, it will be recalled, was a son of the Sun-god.) During the royal spring festival it was taken in procession round a series of cities. One of the places where it was honoured was the temple of the war-god whose name is written with the Numerogram ZABA.BA₄. We also hear of a bag made from a fleece being suspended from the branch of a tree before the god Telibinu after his return from a disappearance; in it are placed mutton fat, wine, and symbols of animal fecundity, long life, progeny, plenty, abundance, etc. In another text it is the fleece that disappears instead of the god. When it is found it is laid in the grove of the mother goddess Hannahanna.¹²² These various details suggest that behind the myth of the golden fleece that hung in (and was taken away from) a sacred grove at Colchis there lurks the holy fleece of Anatolian cult.

The Colchian fleece is guarded by a great serpent, which Medea lulls to sleep with a magical incantation and salve. She then becomes Jason's

¹¹⁶ 2 Kt 2. 11, 16 f.

¹¹⁷ Burkert (1992), 122.

¹¹⁸ Above, pp. 64 f.; Ael. *HA*. 12. 21.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Robertson Smith, 308 f., 366, 466 f.; Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 21 n. 35, 65; id. (1992), 115.

¹²⁰ *Cypria Arg.*; *Gen.* 22. 1–14; Dornseiff, 234; Astour, 282.

¹²¹ M. Popko, *Preglad orientalistyczny* 91, March 1974, 225–30; V. Haas, *UF* 7, 1975, 229 f.

¹²² *CTH* 324 (*ANET* 128; Hoffner, 17 § 29 f.); Haas, op. cit., 230.

wife, a union which is listed in the *Theogony* under the heading of marriages between goddesses and mortal men. This has been compared with the Hittite myth of the serpent Illuyanka, who fought and defeated the Storm-god. He was overcome by an alliance of the goddess Inara with a mortal man, Hubasiya, who agreed to help her on condition that he could be her lover. Inara made the serpent drunk, Hubasiya tied him up, and the Storm-god came back and killed him. Hubasiya then went to live with Inara.¹²³

THE TROJAN CYCLE

The overpopulated earth

In Hesiod's scheme of five successive races of mankind the two great wars of epic tradition, those fought at Thebes and Troy, signal the end of the *hēmitheoi*, the Half-god heroes. Many of them were killed in those conflicts, while others were removed to the Isles of the Blest. This idea was taken up by the poet of the *Catalogue of Women*. In a tantalizingly damaged papyrus fragment from the fifth book, immediately after Helen's marriage to Menelaus and the birth of their daughter Hermione have been recorded, we read:

πάντες δὲ θεοὶ δίχα θυμὸν ἔθεντο
ἐξ ἔριδος· δὴ γὰρ τότε μῆδετο θέσκελα ἔργα
Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, τμείξει κατ' ἀπείρονα γαίαν
τυρβάξας τ'. ἤδη δὲ γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
πολλὸν αἵστωσαι σπεύδεις, πρόφασιν μὲν ὀλέσθαι
ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων ἰοισι βροτοῖσι
τέκνα θεῶν μὴ [...] ὁφθαλμοῖσιν ὀρώντα.

Now all the gods were divided in two parties
by dissension, for just then Zeus who roars on high was planning
tremendous things, to stir up troubles(?) on the boundless earth.
For now he was eager to annihilate
the multitudinous human race, giving as his ground the perdition
of the Half-gods' lives
children of the gods ...¹²⁴

The account of Zeus' plan continued for nine further lines. It apparently comprised, besides the great war that was about to break out, the removal of the Half-gods to a happy place far away from mankind and the imposition of a harsher life on the rest of us.

Zeus' motive for destroying much of the human race is not entirely clear in this passage. What is meant by the phrase ὀλέσθαι ψυχὰς ἡμιθέων? In any case, this is given as his *ostensible* reason (πρόφασιν μὲν), with a suggestion that he had an ulterior motive. The word 'multitudinous'—if this is the right interpretation of πολλόν here—may be an indication that he thought the world had become overpopulated.

In the *Cypria* this was certainly given as the explanation of the Trojan War. Stasinus, if that was the poet's name, relates that once upon a time the earth was oppressed by the huge numbers of people milling about on it. Zeus took pity, and conceived the plan of lightening the burden by bringing about the great war of Troy. The scholiast on the *Iliad* who quotes the fragment precedes it with an expanded version of the story. Here Earth herself appeals to Zeus for relief, complaining not only of the size of the human race but also of its lack of piety. Zeus responds firstly with the Theban War, and then, in consultation with Momos, with the Trojan. In this version he considers alternative forms of action, such as destroying all that remained of humanity after the Theban War with thunderbolts, or by a flood, but Momos dissuades him from this and proposes the marriage of Thetis to a mortal as the means of starting trouble.¹²⁵

The motif that the highest god devises a great catastrophe because mankind has become too numerous and too obstreperous plays a prominent part in one of the Babylonian classics, *Atrahasis*. The gods have created man to take over all the hard work. But

There had not gone by 600 and 600 years
when the land became wide, the people numerous;
the land was roaring like a bull.
The god became restless at their racket,
Enlil had an earful of their shouting.¹²⁶

¹²³ CTH 321 (ANET 125 f.; Hoffner, 11 f.); Haas, op. cit., 231–3. For Medea's divinity see West (1966), 429.

¹²⁴ Fr. 204.95–101. Cf. M. L. West, CQ 11, 1961, 132–6, and (1985), 119–21; R. Scodel, HSCP 86, 1982, 33–50; L. Koenen, TAPA 124, 1994, 1–34.

¹²⁵ *Cypria* fr. 1 Bernabé and Davies; sch. AD B. 1. 5 with An. Ox. iv. 405. 6 ff. Cramer; cf. Eur. El. 1282, Hel. 36–41, Or. 1836–41 with scholia. In the *Cypria*, according to Proclus' summary, Zeus' adviser was Themis, not Momos; so too the *Iliad* hypothesis in P. Oxy. 3829 ii 9 ff., where Zeus is moved not by overpopulation but by the wickedness of the race of heroes, and plans to destroy them utterly: ὁ Ζεὺς ἀσέβειαν καταγνοὺς τοῦ ἡρωικοῦ γένους βουλευέται μετὰ Θέμιδος ἄρδην αὐτοὺς ἀπολέσαι.

¹²⁶ Atr. 1.352–6.

He responds by addressing the gods and calling for a plague. Mankind survives that, and continues to give trouble. The same version is repeated, and this time Enlil calls for a famine. They were no doubt repeated again before he resorted to a flood.

The flood story, as we shall see later, was adapted into Greek in perhaps the second half of the sixth century. We can hardly avoid the assumption that the overpopulation motif used in the *Cypria* likewise has its source in Babylonian epic.¹²⁷ It is true that a similar myth is found in Indian epic: it is related that the earth once complained to Brahmā of the ever-increasing weight of mankind, and Brahmā created death to alleviate the problem.¹²⁸ But it would be very rash to infer from the coincidence between the Indian myth and the *Cypria* that some ancient Indo-European tradition lay behind both passages. The motif appears only in a late phase of the Greek epic tradition, and at an even later date in India. It is attested over a thousand years earlier in Mesopotamia, and as it is certain that Mesopotamian influence extended eastwards to India as well as westwards to Greece, we must conclude that this is an example of it.

The wedding of Peleus

Peleus is a figure who moves in a world of folk-tale and legend rather than of quasi-historical saga. As a young man he is the hero of a typical Zuleika story (p. 365). The wife of Acastus, the king of Iolcus, falls in love with him and tries to seduce him. When he rejects her advances she denounces him to her husband. Acastus takes him hunting on Mt. Pelion and, while he is asleep, hides his dagger in a cowpat and abandons him, defenceless, to be killed by the wild Centaurs of the mountain. But he survives, with the help of the gods, and later returns to Iolcus and sacks it.

His marriage to Thetis is generally represented as the result of Zeus' decision that she must wed a mortal. But there was also a tradition that he won her by means of a physical struggle. In the usual manner of watery deities she kept changing shape into all kinds of alarming creatures, but he followed the correct procedure in such cases and clung on until she gave up, her final form being that of a cuttlefish.¹²⁹ It is the same when Menelaus wrestles with Proteus, or Heracles with Nereus and

Arctelous.¹³⁰ In all these cases except the last, the hero desires a particular boon from the water-spirit. Menelaus and Heracles want prophetic guidance, and Pelcus wants acceptance as a husband. There is a prolonged grappling and finally the deity concedes what is wanted.

The same pattern appears in the biblical myth of Jacob's nocturnal crossing of the river Yabboq. After sending his wives, maids, children, and baggage across the ford, he was left by himself, 'and a man wrestled with him until the dawn went up'. At dawn the mysterious opponent, having failed to prevail over Jacob, asked to be released, but Jacob refused, saying 'I will not let you go unless you bless me'. The stranger asked him his name, and then said, 'No longer will your name be called Jacob, but Israel [sc. *yisrā-ʾēl*, 'he contended with El'], because you have contended with God and with men and prevailed.' He declines to reveal his own name, but gives the requested blessing. Jacob names the place Pnū-ʾēl, 'Face of El', 'because I have seen God face to face and (yet) my life was saved'. He had, then, wrestled with a divinity and by refusing to let go secured a boon. Frazer was surely correct in supposing that in an earlier form of the story the hero's adversary was none other than 'the spirit or jinnée of the river', the Yabboq itself.¹³¹

There was more to Peleus' nuptials, however, than a tumble with a cuttlefish. The poets and artists tell of a grand wedding which all the gods attended.¹³² The motif of the gods' attendance at a mortal king's wedding is paralleled in the Ugaritic Keret epic. After winning the girl of his desire, the princess Ḥry of Udm, Keret holds a banquet, to which the congregation of the gods comes. There they drink and pronounce blessings on Keret and Ḥry before returning to their abodes.¹³³

The gathering storm

Keret got his bride by leading an expedition against her city and laying siege to it. This has been claimed as a precedent for the myth of the expedition against Troy for the sake of Helen.¹³⁴ It is actually more

¹²⁷ Od. 4. 454-61, Stes. S 16a (PMGF p. 160), Soph. Tr. 9-21, etc.; cf. M. Nink, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten* (Philologus Suppl. 14. 2), Leipzig 1921 (Darmstadt 1960), 138-41.

¹²⁸ Gen. 32. 23(22)-33(32); Frazer, ii. 410-13.

¹²⁹ Il. 18. 84 f., 24. 62 f., 'Hes.' fr. 211. 9, *Cypria* Arg. and fr. 3 B. = D., Alc. 42, François Vase, etc.

¹³⁰ KTU 1. 15 ii 8-iii 19, compared by Gordon (1955), 59; Webster (1958), 87.

¹³¹ So Gordon in various publications; Webster (1958), 86 f. Gordon mistakenly supposes that Keret is recovering a wife who has gone away; his error is refuted by M. Maróth, *Acta Antiqua* 23, 1975, 65-7. We should also remember that the Trojan War did not, strictly speaking, involve a siege.

¹²⁷ Wirth, 132; Burkert (1992), 100-3.

¹²⁸ R. Köhler, *Rh. Mus.* 13, 1858, 316 f.; J. W. de Jong, *JAOIS* 105, 1985, 397-400. For world-wide folk myths of the invention of death to meet the problem of infinite population expansion see H. Schwarzbaum, *Numen* 4, 1957, 59-74.

¹²⁹ Pind. *Nem.* 3. 35 f., 4. 62-5, with schol.; Ov. *Met.* 11. 235-65; Apollod. 3. 13. 5 with Frazer; many artistic representations; Gantz, 229.

comparable with the story of Heracles' assault on Oichalia to obtain Iphigeneia, though there is little similarity in detail.

When the Atridae were mobilizing their forces, Odysseus is said to have tried to evade the draft by simulating insanity. We find the same motif in the saga of Saul and David. David, on the run from Saul, comes to Gath, where he apparently hopes to lie low but is quickly recognized. Afraid that the king will seize him, when brought into the royal presence he pretends to be a lunatic, and is dismissed.¹³⁵

Before the Achaeans sail for Troy, their leader Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter to Artemis. We have already had occasion to mention the episode in two other contexts (pp. 442, 479): firstly in connection with the motif that a man binds himself to sacrifice something defined in such terms that it is quite unexpected when it turns out to be his own child, and secondly in connection with the motif that an animal is substituted for the human victim at the last minute. We have now to consider it from another angle.

The conventional account is that Iphigeneia had to be sacrificed so that the adverse winds would abate and allow the ships to sail. But at an earlier stage of the tradition it may be that it was presented more simply as a major sacrifice performed by the commander-in-chief for the sake of success in the impending conflict.¹³⁶ The Hellenistic historian Phylarchus asserted that it was the general Greek custom to perform a human sacrifice at the start of a campaign. This is certainly untrue of any historical era; the sacrifice of three prisoners of war before the battle of Salamis was exceptional. But Phylarchus' statement may have been inspired by myths such as that of the Thracian invasion of Attica, when the oracle told Erechtheus that he must sacrifice his daughter in order to defeat the enemy. Euripides introduced the motif into other mythical wars too.¹³⁷ The oracle is a typically Greek touch. But the sacrifice for victory is paralleled in the West Semitic area. It is to defeat the Ammonites that Jephthah sacrifices his daughter (though he did not expect her to be the designated victim: p. 441). Mesha, that king of Moab who has left us the inscription that is the chief document of his language, revolted against the domination of Israel, but did not succeed in throwing it off until he offered his eldest son as a burnt sacrifice. We are told that the Phoenician rulers, in great crises such as war, pestilence, or drought, used to sacrifice one of their dearest children to El, who

inaugurated the custom by sacrificing his own only son when the country was in the grip of war.¹³⁸

The sack of Troy

In the last year of the war the Achaeans lost their two greatest warriors. Achilles was killed in battle, and the dispute over who should have his armour led to Ajax ending his own life. Ajax's death was an extraordinary event. A male suicide is practically unheard of in Greek mythology. The method used is striking and distinctive: he falls on his sword. But just the same end is attributed to a major figure of Near Eastern history: the first king of the Hebrews, Saul. Overcome in battle by the Philistines, three of his sons killed, himself wounded by arrows, he calls upon his armour-bearer to run him through with his sword. The man is too shy. So Saul takes his own sword and falls upon it.¹³⁹

After the death of Ajax, Philoctetes was fetched from Lemnos. He had been on his way to Troy with the rest of the expedition, when he was incapacitated by a snake bite; the Achaeans had left him in a cave on the island and moved on. But in the end it turned out that he had an essential contribution to make to the winning of the war.

The pattern is paralleled in one of the early Sumerian myths about Lugalbanda, the father of Gilgamesh. Before he became king of Uruk he was a general in Enmerkar's army. When Enmerkar led his great expedition against the distant eastern city of Aratta, Lugalbanda was with it. But on the way he became ill and was unable to go further, so he was left by himself in a cave. There he befriended the storm-bird Imdugud (the Akkadian Anzu), who gave him the gift of speed and endurance as a runner. Eventually he recovered from his illness and caught up with the army. Aratta was holding out successfully against Enmerkar, who was minded to abandon the expedition, if Inanna in Uruk would allow it. Lugalbanda, with his gift of extraordinary speed, was able to take the message back to Uruk in no time. But Inanna then revealed to him how Aratta could be taken: by catching and eating a certain fish in which the city's life was contained. He sped back with this vital intelligence, and Aratta fell.¹⁴⁰

Philoctetes' assets, of course, were of a different nature. He owned a bow given him by Heracles, and it was only with this bow that Troy could be captured. The motif of a special bow given to a king by a god is

¹³⁵ *Cypria* Arg., Soph. *Odysseus Mainomenos*, Apollod. epit. 3. 7, Hyg. *Fab.* 95, etc. (Gantz, 580); 1 Sam. 21. 11(10)–16(15); Gordon (1955), 50; Baumgartner, 164.

¹³⁶ Robertson Smith, 403.

¹³⁷ Phylarchus *FGH* 81 F 80; Eur. *Erechtheus*, *Heraclidae*, *Phoenissae*. In Euripides the victims always nobly volunteer to die.

¹³⁸ *Jdg.* 11. 30–40, 2 Ki. 3. 27; Philo of Byblos *FGH* 790 F 3; cf. Diod. 20. 14. 5 (Carthage, 310 BC).

¹³⁹ 1 Sam. 31. 1–6.

¹⁴⁰ Jacobsen, 320–44.

again Near Eastern. The obelisk of Tiglath-pileser I shows the winged Sun-disc handing him a bow. Sennacherib claimed to have his bow from Aššur, while Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal had theirs from Ishtar.¹⁴¹

Another precondition of the fall of Troy was the removal of its protecting goddess as embodied in her holy statue, the Palladion. Odysseus and Diomedes mounted a commando raid and carried it off. This is an episode entirely oriental in character. It was regular practice in the Near East to carry off the gods of a defeated city, that is, its divine images, and keep them. Marduk was removed from Babylon by the Hittite king Mursili I in the sixteenth century; recovered by the Kassite Agum-kakrime twenty-four years later; carried off again to Aššur by Tukulti-Ninurta in about 1215; restored after a few years; taken to Suhi by the Elamites in 1158; recovered by Nebuchadnezzar I towards the end of the century; removed once more by Sennacherib in 689. A long succession of Assyrian kings, from the thirteenth century to the seventh, carried off foreign gods to Assyria. The Philistines appropriated the Israelites' Ark of the Covenant on defeating them in battle, and held on to it for seven months. David in turn carried off the Philistines' idols after defeating them at Baal-perašim. Amasyahu of Judah took those of the Edomites.¹⁴²

Late sources mention that as the image of Pallas was being carried away by Diomedes, or on its arrival in the Achaean camp, it displayed signs of anger. It moved of its own accord, its eyes flashed fire, it sweated, it shone, it shook its shield and spear:

arsere coruscae
luminibus flammae arrectis, salsusque per artus
sudor iit, terque ipsa solo, mirabile dictu,
emicuit parmamque ferens hastamque trementem.¹⁴³

The story very likely goes back to the *Little Iliad*. But the motif is to be found already in a Babylonian epic account of the Elamite sack of Nippur in the twelfth century. The invader entered the shrine Ennun-dagalla to depose the statue of Enlil, but

before his face the god clothed himself in light,
flashed like lightning and heaved on his seat.
The enemy was afraid, and chased himself off.¹⁴⁴

The breakdown of the city's divine protection may also be expressed by saying that its gods themselves abandon it. Aeschylus' Eteocles observes that a captured city's gods are said to desert it, and Sophocles represented the gods of Troy as carrying their own images away on their shoulders, knowing that the city was forfeit.¹⁴⁵ This desertion of a city by its gods is an absolutely commonplace motif in Sumerian and Akkadian literature.¹⁴⁶ Sometimes they depart in anger at the wickedness of the inhabitants or of the king; sometimes they flee in fear of the forces arrayed against them, turning themselves into birds or some other kind of observable creature. In the fragment on the siege of Uruk we read:

The gods of Uruk the sheepfold
turned into flies, they were buzzing about the plazas;
the protecting deities of Uruk the sheepfold
turned into mongooses and went out via the drains.

There is a possible echo of this undignified mode of exit in classical tradition. Odysseus and Diomedes are said to have got into Troy through a sewer. Literary sources do not mention that they brought the Palladion out by the same route, but it would be logical, and the Capitoline Tabula Iliaca in fact shows them emerging from a vaulted opening which is taken to be that of the Trojan *cloaca maxima*.¹⁴⁷

The story of the Wooden Horse has no close parallel in Near Eastern literature, but it has often been compared with an Egyptian account of how Thuti, an eminent general under Tuthmosis III (c.1479–1427) took Joppa in Palestine. He had apparently been besieging it without success. He pretended to be giving up. The prince of Joppa came out to discuss terms. Thuti got him drunk, and mellowed him further with talk of surrender. The prince asked if he might be allowed to see the Pharaoh's splendid mace, which Thuti had in his camp. Thuti brought it in, displayed it, and then knocked him out with it and tied him up. After making his further preparations, he sent a message in to the city to the effect that he had capitulated, and that they were to expect his tribute.

¹⁴⁵ Aesch. *Sept.* 217 f. (with Rose ad loc.), cf. 304–11; Soph. fr. 452; cf. Hdt. 8. 41. 3, Eur. *Tro.* 23–7, Virg. *Aen.* 2. 351 f., Tac. *Hist.* 5. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *The Lament for Ur* 1–36 (Jacobsen, 448–50); *Shulgi D* 336 f. (J. Klein, *Three Sulgi Hymns* [as ch. 2, n. 23], 84 f.); *Tuk-Nin.* i B obv. 33' ff. (Foster, 212); BM 34062 obv. 18, rev. 3, 7, 12 (Foster, 285 f.); fragment on the fall of Ur, cf. p. 74; Cogan, op. cit. 9–21; Machinist, 151–6.

¹⁴⁷ Uruk fragment (cf. p. 74 n. 37), 11–14; Soph. fr. 367, cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 351 with sch., sch. Eur. *Hec.* 240, Serv. in Virg. *Aen.* 2. 166; Robert, 1233 n. 2; A. Sadurska, *Les tables Iliques*, Warsaw 1964, 28 and pl. I. For the sewer as a smart means of entry to a defended city cf. the story of David's capture of Zion, 2 Sam. 5. 8.

¹⁴¹ Labat, 92 f. Cf. the bow of Aqhat in the Ugaritic epic.

¹⁴² Texts in Foster, 273–5, 294, 299–301, 304 f.; 1 Sam. 4. 11–7, 2. 2 Sam. 5. 21, 2 Chr. 25. 14; Considine, 95; M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.*, Missoula 1974, 22–41, 116 f., 119–21.

¹⁴³ Virg. *Aen.* 2. 171–5, cf. Conon *FGH* 26 F 1 § 34.

¹⁴⁴ BM 34062 obv. 22–4 (Foster, 285).

Five hundred men followed behind, bearing two hundred bulky souled baskets. The gates of Joppa were opened for them. Once they were in, soldiers equipped with bonds and fetters leapt out of the baskets and seized all the able-bodied men in sight.¹⁴⁸

It will be noted that this story (whether true or not) has other features in common with the Greek myth besides the basic theme of smuggling men into a city inside something that looks innocent. The attacker, who has presumably come by sea, has tried for some time to take the well-fortified city by direct assault and failed. He pretends to be abandoning the expedition, inducing those in the city to relax their guard. They are persuaded to open their gates to admit their enemy's offering.

Some rationalists in antiquity took the Wooden Horse to have been a form of siege engine or battering ram.¹⁴⁹ Recently the attractive suggestion has been made that the myth was in fact inspired by Assyrian siege engines as used from the ninth century onwards and depicted in palace reliefs. These were 'enclosed battering rams on wheels, in effect primitive tanks, with archers ensconced in turrets on top'.¹⁵⁰ It has been reckoned that those used by Assurnasirpal had a body up to six metres in length and a forward tower five or six metres tall. The eighth-century type, as used by Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon, with their raised, windowed turret at the front and their body curving down rump-like at the rear, had a profile somewhat suggesting a horse or a ram. Here, then, was a wheeled 'horse' with warriors inside it, designed to break through a city wall. The well-known representation of the Wooden Horse on the neck of a seventh-century relief pithos from Mykonos shows Achaean warriors peering out of it through windows, and others apparently stepping off its back onto the walls of Troy; these details have analogues in the Assyrian representations, which raise the possibility that 'one artist or poet turned a Near Eastern military machine into a Greek "invention"'.¹⁵¹

One further episode in the sack of Troy calls for attention. The Trojan elder Antenor had won Agamemnon's good will by giving hospitality to Menelaus and Odysseus when they went into the city to negotiate for the return of Helen; or, according to a more sensationalist

account, by saving them from being put to death. Some say that he actually betrayed the city by letting the warriors out of the Wooden Horse. Anyhow, orders were given that Antenor's family should be spared, and to identify their house a leopard-skin was hung in front of it. They consequently survived the sack and found a new home in Thrace. The story was certainly familiar in the fifth century, and may have stood in the *Iliou Persis*.¹⁵²

It has a remarkable parallel in the biblical account of Joshua's capture of Jericho. He first sent two spies to assess the situation. They received hospitality from a prostitute called Rahab. The king of the city heard of it and sent word that she was to give them up, but she saved them from arrest, hiding them and helping them to get away. She explained to them that she knew Jericho was to fall to the Israelites. She asked them to swear that in return for her kindness to them her father's house and her whole family should be spared from death. They agreed, and arranged that she should assemble her relatives in the one house, and mark it out by tying a crimson cord on the window. This was duly done. Jericho was taken and burned, people and livestock were put to death, but Rahab, her father's household, and all her family were spared and resettled in Israel.¹⁵³

The analogies with the Greek myth are extensive. Menelaus and Odysseus, who come to Troy before the war has started, correspond to the two Israelite spies. The kindly Antenor, who gives them lodging, saves them from death at the Trojans' hands, and in some accounts even assists the enemy to take his city, corresponds to Rahab. The same agreement is made, to spare not just the benefactor but the benefactor's whole family, with a visible sign being displayed on the house to identify it. The city is taken and burned, but this family is spared and settled elsewhere.

THE FLOOD

We have seen the Trojan War interpreted as a divine measure to reduce the earth's population. The other Greek myth of a great destruction ordained by the gods, the story of Deucalion's Flood, is not attested until the first half of the fifth century, in Epicharmus and Pindar. It does not seem to have had any place in the sixth-century *Catalogue of Women*.

¹⁴⁸ ANET 22 f.; E. F. Wente in W. K. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, New Haven 1973, 81-4; compared by C. Fries, *Klio* 4, 1904, 237 f.

¹⁴⁹ Agatharchides *De Mari Rubro* 7 (i. 115, 44 Müller), *Phn.* NH 7. 202, Paus. 1. 23. 8; Robert, 1229 n. 2.

¹⁵⁰ A. K. Grayson in *CAH* iii(2), 220. See further B. Hrouda, *Die Kulturgeschichte des assyrischen Flachbildes*, Bonn 1965, 91 f. and pl. 24 E; Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands*, London 1963, 314-16, 390-3, 401, 406-9, 413, 422-5, 431, 434-7.

¹⁵¹ S. P. Morris in *The Ages of Homer* (as ch. 3, n. 230), 229, cf. 227-31 with illustrations pp. 232-5.

¹⁵² Painting by Polygnotus described by Paus. 10. 27. 3, *Soph. Aias Lokros* fr. 11 and *Antenoridai*, p. 160 Radt, sch. II. 3. 205a; Lyc. 340-4; Robert, 1007; Gantz, 595.

¹⁵³ Josh. 2. 1-21, 6. 22-5, compared by T. Zielinski, *Eos* 28, 1925, 39; Dornseiff, 332.

Zeus decided to wipe out the human race. The reason, according to some sources, was the wickedness of mankind, or more specifically that of Lycaon.¹⁵⁴ He sent torrential rains, and according to Ovid Neptune assisted by bidding all the rivers to overflow and by triggering an earthquake to tip them out of their beds. The water rose until only a few mountain peaks remained uncovered. Deucalion, forewarned and advised by his father Prometheus, constructed a chest (*larnax*) large enough to accommodate himself and his wife Pyrrha, and in it they floated for nine days and nights until they fetched up on Mt. Parnassus. Deucalion climbed out and sacrificed to Zeus Phyxios. Zeus granted him a boon. He asked for the means to produce a new human race, and was instructed to take up stones and throw them over his shoulder. The ones that he threw turned into men, the ones that Pyrrha threw turned into women.¹⁵⁵

This Greek myth cannot be independent of the Flood story that we know from Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hebrew sources, especially from *Atrahasis*, the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh epic, and the Old Testament.¹⁵⁶ This will become clear if we compare them point by point.

1. The flood results from an initiative of the highest god (Enlil, Yahweh, Zeus). In the Sumero-Akkadian versions his plan is announced and ratified in the divine assembly; so it is in Ovid's account, and while this assembly might be due to Ovid's own poetic fantasy, the allusion in *Prometheus Vincit* lends support to the hypothesis that it stood in a relatively early Greek version.

2. The god's purpose is to destroy the human race. In *Atrahasis* the reason is that mankind has become too numerous, and their noise disturbs Enlil's rest. This corresponds in a way to the explanation given

¹⁵⁴ *Ov. Met.* 1. 163–6, *Apollod.* 3. 8. 2, sch. *Pind. Ol.* 9. 78 b, d, sch. *Eur. Or.* 1646, sch. *Bern. Virg. Ecl.* 6. 41. Ovid's narrative is unfortunately the earliest connected literary account that we have. For a collection of sources (in German translation), analysis, and discussion see Caduff (1986).

¹⁵⁵ *Apollod.* 1. 7. 2, after some lost poetic source. The part played by Prometheus is an early feature, being already in Epicharmus, and probably alluded to in [Aesch.] *PV* 231–6 (cf. S. R. West, *Mus. Helv.* 51, 1994, 133 ff.), though it is omitted in most sources. The *larnax* is also in Epicharmus. The Parnassus location is primary (*Pind. Ol.* 9. 43, etc.), *Hellanicus (FGHst 4 F 11)* made it Othrys; Epicharmus may have transferred it to his local Etna (cf. *Hg. Fab.* 153). Other locations appear in later versions.

¹⁵⁶ For the fragment of a Sumerian Flood narrative, thought to be no older than *Atrahasis*, see *ANET* 42–5; Lambert–Millard, 139–45; T. Jacobsen, *JBL* 100, 1981, 513–29; S. N. Kramer, *An. Stud.* 33, 1983, 115–21; Bottéro–Kramer, 564–7. Fragments of a short account from Ugarit (in Akkadian): Lambert–Millard, 131–3. The late version of Berossus, *FGHst* 680 F 4, is also of interest. Most of the material is conveniently collected in A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Chicago 1946; cf. B. B. Schmidt in *CANE* iv, 2337–51. I suggested earlier (191, 377 f) that the influence of the Flood narrative in the Gilgamesh epic was to be seen in the destruction of the Achaean wall in the *Iliad*.

in the *Cypria* for the Trojan War. In the Old Testament the case is that Yahweh sees the earth to be 'ruined', being filled with violence and unrighteousness. This resembles the reason given in the Graeco-Roman version by those sources that give a reason.¹⁵⁷

3. A flood is not the only option that comes into question. In *Atrahasis* it is only the last of a series of attempts to destroy mankind: Enlil has tried plague and famine first. In the Gilgamesh epic, after Enlil sees that someone has survived the flood, Ea reproaches him for having sent such a comprehensive calamity that does not distinguish between the guilty and the innocent.

Instead of arranging a flood, let a lion arise and diminish the peoples.

Instead of arranging a flood, let a wolf arise and diminish the peoples.

Instead of arranging a flood, let a famine be arranged and [strike] the land.

Instead of arranging a flood, let Erra arise and strike the peoples.

In Ovid's version Jupiter first considers setting the earth aflame with his lightning bolts, but then settles for the flood. Similarly in one version of the preliminaries to the Trojan War: there fire and flood are the rejected options.¹⁵⁸

4. The man who is to survive the flood receives divine forewarning and practical advice. In the Old Testament it is Yahweh himself, the instigator of the flood, who warns Noah and ensures his survival, because of his virtue. In the Mesopotamian accounts it is the wise and cunning god Enki/Ea, who disagrees with Enlil's plan for total destruction and devises this means of thwarting it. The man he warns, Ziusudra/Atrahasis/Ut-napishtim, is a pious servant of his who enjoys a specially close relationship with him. In the Sumerian version and in Berossus he is called a king, and in *Atrahasis* he appears to have some similar status in his city. The Greek story corresponds quite closely to this. Prometheus, the wise and cunning god, gives away the secret contrary to Zeus' wishes. He discloses it to his son Deucalion, who is a king in central Greece.¹⁵⁹

5. The favoured hero is instructed to build, not a regular boat, but a large rectangular container. In the Sumerian and Akkadian versions it is indeed called a 'boat' (*magurgur*, *eleppu*), but the measurements given in the Gilgamesh epic imply that it was cubic: the height of its 'walls' was

¹⁵⁷ Pseudo-Aeschylus does not give a reason, but he says that Zeus wanted to replace the existing race with a new one, which implies that he was moved by the defects of the old race, not by rooted antipathy to humankind. Cf. *Ov. Met.* 1. 250–2.

¹⁵⁸ *Gilg.* XI 182–5; *Ov. Met.* 1. 253–9; sch. II 1. 5.

¹⁵⁹ In Ovid, where Prometheus is eliminated, Deucalion and Pyrrha survive by luck. Zeus notices them and, seeing that they are a pious and innocuous couple, halts the rains.

10 *aklū* (c. 60 m.), each edge of its top the same, and the base area was one *ikū* = 100 sq. *aklū*. It was roofed over and completely enclosed. In Genesis the vessel is called a 'chest', *tēbāh*, rendered in the Septuagint as *kibōtos*.¹⁶⁰ It is 300 cubits long by 50 broad and 30 high. Deucalion's transport is also a chest, *larnax*. We are not told its dimensions, but in a fragment from Epicharmus' play *Pyrrha and Prometheus* Deucalion apparently asks Prometheus how big it should be, and receives the answer that it should be big enough to take 'you' (plural) { and a month's provisions}.¹⁶¹

6. The hero is accompanied by his wife in all versions. In the oriental accounts he takes an extended family, and moreover 'the seed of all living things', birds, animals, etc. (and in the Gilgamesh epic even representatives of every skilled trade). In the Greek myth, according to all the older sources, Deucalion and Pyrrha are alone.¹⁶²

7. The flood is brought about by violent and prolonged rainstorms in all versions. In Genesis, in addition, the springs of the great deep burst open; this might be considered to have a parallel in the accessory part played by Neptune (Poseidon) in Ovid's account, as mentioned above.

8. The duration of the flood varies in different sources. The 40 or 150 days' duration of the Genesis version is much the longest. Epicharmus' reference to a month's provisions need not be taken too literally. Apollodorus says that Deucalion drifted in the chest 'for nine days and the same number of nights', which sounds like the echo of a phrase from a hexameter narrative.¹⁶³ In the Gilgamesh epic the storm rages 'for six days and [six (or seven?)] nights', and blows itself out on the seventh day.¹⁶⁴

9. The container comes to rest at the top of a high mountain: in the Gilgamesh epic Nimush,¹⁶⁵ in Berossus the Kordyaian mountains of

¹⁶⁰ The Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament otherwise only of the closed container made for Moses in Exod. 2.

¹⁶¹ P. Oxy 2427 fr. 1(b) 4-5. In *Atrahasis* and Genesis too the hero is advised how long the flood will last.

¹⁶² Lucian's version (*De dea Syria* 12), in which Deucalion takes with him 'his sons and his wives' (corrupt for 'his wife, sons, and sons' wives?'), and pairs of every animal, must represent a later contamination with the Jewish account. The same is presumably true of Plut. *De sollert. anim.* 13. 968f, where we read of Deucalion sending out a dove several times to check whether any land was within reach. For this as a practice of sailors in the waters around Sri Lanka see Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 6. 11, in Iceland. *Landnámabók* 2. (I owe these references to Stephanie West.)

¹⁶³ Caduff, 100, 131, who thinks of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, wrongly in my view. For the expression cf. A. R. 4. 1233 f.; for the formula 'for nine days and nights ... on the tenth day ...' of Hes. *Th.* 722-5, *Hymn. Ap.* 91.

¹⁶⁴ XI 127; cf. *Atr.* III i 37.

¹⁶⁵ W. G. Lambert, *RA* 80, 1986, 185 f.; previously read as Nišir. It may be Pir Omar Gudrun, north-east of Kirkuk.

Armenia, in Genesis 'the mountains of Ararat (= Urartu)', in the Greek legend (originally) Parnassus.

10. After emerging, the hero makes a sacrifice.¹⁶⁶ In Berossus, Genesis, and some of the Graeco-Roman versions he builds an altar or a shrine.

11. Although in all versions the sole or principal survivors of the flood are a married couple, in no version do they repopulate the earth by having (further) children. In the Mesopotamian accounts the pair are forthwith removed by the gods to live for ever at the ends of the earth, and their fellow-voyagers are left to see to the regeneration of the human race. In Genesis it is effected by Noah's three sturdy centenarian sons and their wives. Deucalion and Pyrrha are on their own, but quite at a loss on the multiplication issue until, under divine guidance, they try the trick with stones.¹⁶⁷

While we do not find perfect agreement in all details, and should not expect to, the Deucalion myth corresponds at so many points to the Near Eastern myth that there can be no doubt of its derivation from a Semitic source. The date of the borrowing is not likely to be earlier than 550, given the absence of allusions before Epicharmus, their frequency thereafter, and pseudo-Hesiod's apparent ignorance of the story. It presumably made its appearance in some particular poem which served as a source for Epicharmus, Pindar, the author of *Prometheus Vincit*, and (directly or indirectly) for later authors such as Ovid and Apollodorus. The recent suggestion that we should think of the Cyclical *Ilíonomachy*¹⁶⁸ has its attractions, especially as Apollodorus seems to have derived some other material from that epic.¹⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

It will now be apparent that the West Asiatic influence on Greek poetry and myth which is the subject of this book did not burst in at one particular time and then stop. New oriental elements continued to percolate throughout the Archaic period. The myth of the overpopulated

¹⁶⁶ Sumerian version, 210 f.; *Atr.* III v 1-5; *Gilg.* XI 155-61; Berossus; Gen. 8. 20; Apollod. 1. 7. 2, *Marm. Par.* *FGrHist* 239 A 4, *Arrian FGrHist* 156 F 16; cf. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 1.

¹⁶⁷ This story seems to have been current about Deucalion and Pyrrha before the Flood legend was ever attached to them. It was a local myth about the first men. Cf. Hes. fr. 234; L. Preller and E. Robert, *Theogonie und Götter (Griechische Mythologie)*, i, Berlin 1894, 84 n. 2; West (1985), 55.

¹⁶⁸ S. R. West, *Mus. Helv.* 51, 1994, 146 f.

¹⁶⁹ West (1983), 126.

earth in the *Cypria* provided a motivation of the Trojan War that was still unknown to Hesiod and Homer. The eastern Flood myth, while it may have influenced a passage of the *Iliad*, did not generate a Greek Flood myth, so far as we can see, before the late sixth or the early fifth century. Many of the myths cited in this chapter are not attested until the tragedians or the logographers; some of them, no doubt, had a place in older sources now lost, but we cannot assume this of them all.

As we review the non-epic poetry of the period 650–450 in the next two chapters we shall find further evidence for the continuing reception of themes, thoughts, idioms, and images from the Near East. Again we must remember that things may be older than their earliest attestation. A motif that first surfaces in Aeschylus might have been circulating in Greece for two or three hundred years before him without finding expression in the epic or other poetry now extant. But that is unlikely to be the case with more than a small part of the material to be considered

10

The Lyric Poets

The term 'the lyric poets' is here used in the conventional, practically meaningless but frequently convenient catch-all sense in which it covers all authors of non-hexameter and non-dramatic poetry down to Pindar and Bacchylides. The poets with whom I shall have occasion to deal will be disposed under the broad headings of iambus, elegy, and melic poetry. In terms of literary history these are not completely satisfactory terms, because there is some overlap between them; but there is no need to go into that.

The review of these poets will extend the inquiry in two ways. The first is chronological. In considering myths in the last chapter we were dealing with material of often uncertain age, some of it clearly going back to the eighth century or before, some of it not much, if at all, earlier (in Greece) than 500. Now we shall be proceeding in an orderly fashion through reasonably well dated texts that take us from the mid seventh to the mid fifth century. The other extension is in register. Certain popular forms of utterance that were excluded from epic, or at any rate under-represented in it, such as proverb and fable, will come more clearly into view in the less elevated types of poetry that we shall be concerned with here.

IAMBUS¹

The *iambos* was an ancient institution which, to judge by its non-Greek name, had its roots in the pre-Hellenic culture of the Aegean. Both this historical background and the popular nature of the festivity with which the iambus was associated are conditions favourable to the sporadic appearance of motifs that link up with the Near East.

The Ionian iambus, represented principally by Archilochus, Semonides, and Hipponax, is a poetic monologue, or sometimes a monody of simple structure. The speaker ridicules or denounces individuals, or classes of individual, in an amusing or entertaining way, or he gives accounts of sexual or picaresque adventures in which he claims to have

¹ The substance of the first part of this section was presented in ZPE 102, 1994, 1–5.

been involved, using language of a vulgarity found otherwise only in comedy. He may act a character part. We hear of a similar kind of entertainer at Sparta called a δεικηλιστάς, 'representationist', who used a low style of speech and acted the part, as it might be, of someone stealing fruit, or a foreign doctor.²

From an early period Mesopotamia and lands influenced by Mesopotamian culture knew an entertainer of a not altogether dissimilar character: the *aluzinnu*.³ He has been described as 'a buffoon who made a living entertaining others with parodies, mimicry, and scatological songs'.⁴ In lexical lists the *aluzinnu* appears in immediate association with words meaning 'slanderer', 'farther', and 'shitter'. One of his characteristics is that he is absurdly boastful. He recounts ridiculous adventures in which he has been involved; he makes fun of dignified persons such as the *āšipū* (incantation-priests) by impersonating them and producing preposterous ritual prescriptions; there is possible evidence for female impersonation too.⁵ He may originally have had some cult connection, as in the Ur III period (21st–20th centuries) he is listed among temple personnel. In the early second millennium there is a record of an *aluzinnu* performing at wedding festivities in Alalakh, a mere thirty miles from the Mediterranean.⁶ Similar Bronze Age popular entertainments in the Aegean area may have formed the background out of which the iambus and its congeners evolved.

A conspicuous feature of the Ionian iambus is the uninhibited description of sexual activities involving promiscuous young women. In Archilochus they are the daughters of Lycambes, Neoboule and her younger sister. We have a series of fragments which are naturally taken to refer to the willing participation of one or other or both of them in sexual activities, described in graphic detail.⁷ Two fragments (39, 49) suggest the presence of several males, and elsewhere (fr. 207–8) Neoboule was called by abusive names that imply prostitution. There can be little doubt that originally, at any rate, this bawdy element was ritually determined, and connected with the promotion of fertility.⁸ The scandalous behaviour of Lycambes' daughters is in fact located in a

colloquial setting: Archilochus described assignations with them in the *epithymoi* of Hera.⁹

Women who give themselves to a series of men on a goddess's holy ground make us think of oriental sacral prostitution. The suspicion is not that this existed in seventh-century Paros—Archilochus represented sharing on holy ground as a novel scandal, not as something institutionalized—but rather that it is the underlying source from which the scene ultimately derives.

A recently published tablet from Nippur strengthens the link. It is the libretto of a song dating, according to the colophon, from the accession-year of Hammurabi, and perhaps indeed of Old Babylonian origin, though in its present linguistic form it has to be dated to the Kassite period.¹⁰ It is complete in twenty lines. The first line is 'Rejoicing, that's a (sure) foundation for a (or the) city!', and all the other lines have this as a following refrain or response. Lines 2–7 are too fragmentary to translate, but they seem to contain references to Ishtar, to young men and a girl, and perhaps to a temple prostitute. Lines 8–20 read:

One ca[me to her, and: (Refrain)]
 'Come, accept me!' (Refrain)
 Another too came to her and: (Refrain)
 'Come, let me touch your "intel"! (Refrain)
 'Well, as I am accepting you (pl.), (Refrain)
 gather me the young men of your city, (Refrain)
 and let's go to the shadow of the (or a) wall!' (Refrain)
 Seven to her waist, seven to her haunches, (Refrain)
 sixty and sixty find relief on her nakedness. (Refrain)
 The young men have wearied, (but) Ishtar is not wearied:
 (Refrain)
 'Set to, young men, on my "intel", such a nice one!' (Refrain)
 When the girl spoke (thus), (Refrain)
 the young men heard, they accepted her word! (Refrain)

One might take this for some sort of tavern song. But the colophon identifies it as a *pārum* of Ishtar; *pārum* is a rare term denoting some kind of song honouring a deity. Von Soden suggests that the tablet contains an excerpt from a temple ritual; he considers that the constantly repeated refrain points to a cult song performed before a crowd.

² Sossibus, *FGrHist* 595 F 7. On the iambus see West (1974), 22–39.

³ See B. R. Foster, *JANES* 6, 1974, 74–9; W. H. P. Römer, *Persica* 7, 1975–8, 43–68. *Aluzinnu* is a loan word in Akkadian of unknown origin, the Sumerian equivalent being *alam-zu*. Stephanie West has made the interesting suggestion that this is the origin of the Greek word *alazôn* 'mountebank' (*ZPE* 102, 1994, 2 n. 8).

⁴ Foster, *op. cit.*, 74.

⁵ Cf. Semonides 16, where the speaker appears to be a prostitute.

⁶ Römer, *op. cit.*, 50 f.

⁷ Fr. 30 ff.; West (1974), 26 and 123–5.

⁸ Cf. the role of Iambe in the Demeter myth: West (1974), 23–5.

⁹ Dioscorides, *A.P.* 7. 351. 8 = 1562 Gow–Page.

¹⁰ W. von Soden, *Or. N.S.* 60, 1991, 339–42; Foster, 590.

A festive, bawdy song, performed in a cult setting, celebrating the fantastically insatiable young woman who wears out throngs of young men: this is all curiously reminiscent of Archilochus' bawdy narrative about Neoboule. Have we here come upon some kind of distant, ancient relative of the Ionian iambus?

Archilochus: sexual fragments

We shall now look at specific fragments of Archilochus, beginning with those that relate to the sexual theme.

Fragments 36 and 37 are single lines which may well have belonged together:

They lay down by the wall, in its shadow;
for such is the enclosing barrier that runs round the court.

It is a fair guess that the place in question is the *temenos* of Hera. The picture is of one or both of Lycambes' daughters lying down with one or more lovers in the shadow of the *temenos* wall. Then fr. 47 is addressed to someone whom 'the maidens' drove away from the doors with sticks, perhaps virgin priestesses putting an end to the sacrilegious shenanigans. 'The shadow of a wall' is in fact exactly the typical station of the Babylonian prostitute. In the Gilgamesh epic the dying Enkidu lays a curse on the harlot Shamhat who seduced him from the wild and set him on the road to ruin; he is actually laying down the law for all future prostitutes:

'The crossroads shall be your sitting-place,
the wasteland shall be your couch,
the shadow of a wall shall be your standing-place.'¹¹

The insatiable girl in the *pārum* of Ishtar quoted above invites the young men of the city to come with her to 'the shadow of a wall' for an orgy. Two further fragments in which Archilochus related that 'every man rolled back his foreskin' (39) and that 'they stooped and spurted off all their accumulated wantonness' (45) fit easily into the same picture.

In fr. 42 one of the Lycambids is described in action in these terms:

Like a Thracian or Phrygian drinking beer through a tube
she sucked; and she was hard at work astoop.

She is performing fellatio, described with a graphic simile, and at the same time being penetrated from behind. At various sites in

¹¹ *Gilg.* VII lit 22-4. The last line recurs in a similar passage in the *Descent of Ishtar* (106), where Ereshkigal curses the rent-boy.

'Mesopotamia baked clay plaques have been found, dating from the Old Babylonian period, a thousand years or so before Archilochus, and showing a scene of sexual intercourse with the man entering the woman from behind while she is bending forward and drinking through a tube from a jar that stands on the ground.¹² The gap in time and space between these and Archilochus may seem problematic. But the same scene recurs on a cylinder seal from Cyprus, dated to the fourteenth or thirteenth century (here with a griffin watching the proceedings), and on four Persian seals of the Achaemenid period.¹³ Whether or not it originally had some ritual significance is unknown. It may be significant that one probable example comes from the temple of Ishtar at Aššur. At any rate the strange scene enjoyed a wide diffusion in the ancient Near East, and it may be thought to have some relevance to the Archilochus fragment, even if the drinking through a tube is a literal act on the plaques and seals and only a simile in the Greek poet.

In fr. 43 a man's ejaculation is illustrated with another vivid simile.

And his dong
... flooded over like a Prienian
stall-fed donkey's.

Here the parallel occurs in a most surprising place: in the fulminations of the prophet Ezekiel.

In the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt and was infatuated with her lovers there, whose members (lit. 'meat') were the members of asses and whose deluge (of semen) was the deluge of horses.¹⁴

It is particularly remarkable that the context is a fantasy of two sisters (symbolizing Samaria and Jerusalem) who have abandoned themselves to lechery and grown old in it—a parallel to the two daughters of Lycambes. Ezekiel wrote in Babylon and was palpably tinged with Babylonian culture. Has he based his allegory on a form of salacious popular literature or entertainment current in that country?

In the Cologne Epode Archilochus describes, in the rather more reticent language appropriate to a song, an encounter in a meadow with Lycambes' younger daughter. He tells how he asked her to let him go

¹² R. Opificius, *Das altbabylonische Terrakottarelieff*, Berlin 1961, 166-8, nos. 604-6, 608-9, 612-13, and p. 268 Taf. 20 no. 612; P. R. S. Moorey, *Iraq* 37, 1975, 91-2 and pl. xxv b, c; J. S. Cooper in *RIA* iv, 262-3 and 266; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon*, 2nd ed., London 1988, pl. 51c (after p. 362). I am indebted for these references to Dr Anthony Green.

¹³ E. Porada, *AJA* 52, 1948, 191-2 and pl. x no. 39; H. H. von der Otten, *Art Bulletin* 13, 1931, 224 fig. 14b; Cooper, *op. cit.*, 268.

¹⁴ Ezek. 23. 19 f. The Septuagint has a variant formulation which speaks of the members of both asses and horses and eliminates the 'deluge'.

'under the cornice and ... the gates' (fr. 196a. 21, ὀφρυκοῦ δ' ἐνερθε καὶ πυλέων), that is, to allow vaginal penetration. The metaphor is paralleled in the 'lintel' of the Babylonian 'Iambus' quoted above. The Akkadian word which I translated as 'lintel', *hurdatu*, means (a) a cross-beam, (b) the female sex organs.

Archilochus: other fragments

Later in the same song Archilochus says that he has no wish to marry the promiscuous Neoboule:

I am afraid of [begett]ing blind and premature offspring
from excessive haste,
just like the (proverbial) b[itch].¹⁵

This is a proverb that was current more than a thousand years earlier in Sumerian and Akkadian. It is already quoted in a letter from the Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad I to his son, the ruler of Mari: 'the bitch in her haste gave birth to blind ones'. It has lived on through the millennia, versions have been traced in Turkish, Italian, and Arabic.¹⁶

Such items of popular wisdom must have spread all over the Near East and into the Aegean, and it is natural that they should surface in a poet such as Archilochus, who draws freely on popular turns of speech. Another is to be recognized in fr. 23. 15 f.:

I know how to hate my enemy and be the ant
that []s him.

The parallel comes again from a letter, this time one found at Amarna and written in a mixed Canaanite-Akkadian dialect: 'When ants are struck, they do not (just) accept it, but bite the hand of the man that strikes them.'¹⁷

Fragment 24 is addressed to someone, a friend or relative, who has returned safely from a dangerous sea crossing. At the end of the poem Archilochus appears to say that he had been 'lying in the (nether) darkness' (ἐν ζόφῳ) but has now been set back on his feet in the light of day (ἐξ] φάος κλάτρεσθην). This is tantamount to saying that he had been 'dead' and was now restored to 'life'. In Akkadian this is a commonplace metaphor. Compare, from seventh-century letters:

¹⁵ Fr. 196a. 39-41. The supplement 'b[itch]' is guaranteed by references to the proverb in later Greek sources (sch. Ar. Pac 1078, Macar. 5. 32; Aesop. 223 Perry).

¹⁶ G. Dossin, *ARM* 1 no. 5. 11-13; *BWL* 280; Foster, 349; W. W. Hallo in Abusch et al., 208, with references to the growing secondary literature; Burkert (1992), 122.

¹⁷ EA 252. 16, elucidated by W. F. Albright, *BASOR* 89, Feb. 1943, 29-32; *ANET* 486; *BWL* 282; Moran, 305; Foster, 350.

After the city Birat was destroyed and its gods taken away, I was dead; but when I saw the gold signet-ring of the king my master, I came (back) to life.

With the many deeds of kindness which the king my master has done and bestowed since his accession, dead dog and son of nobody that I am, the king my master has brought me (back) to life.¹⁸

Fragment 122 is the beginning of an iambus. It starts with the observation that nothing is surprising any more; even the most extraordinary things may happen, since Zeus has turned noonday into night. (This presumably refers to the total solar eclipse of 6 April 648.)

From now on all is credible, and like enough to be;
let none of you now be surprised at anything you see,
not even if land animals switch to where dolphins roam,
and the salt sea and the crashing waves become their chosen home,
while dolphins take a fancy to the mountains and the trees.

The text then becomes very fragmentary, but we can see that in the next line the speaker focussed on a particular happening in the local community, no doubt one that was unexpected or contrary to the natural course of things. It concerned one Archeanactides and a marriage which he or someone else had contracted, and we know that the speaker went on to talk about his own daughter.

The plaster inscription from Deir 'Allā in Jordan with the account of the vision of the seer Balaam, dating from more than a century before Archilochus' poem, presents us with a somewhat similar complex: extinction of the sun's light by divine command, and a series of role-reversals in the animal world, presumably in the context of some perverse or outrageous human action:

'The gods gathered together, and the Shaddayin stood in the assembly. And they said to Sh[amash], "Stitch up (and) bolt the heavens in your clouds! Impose darkness instead of eternal brightness, and on your bolt put a seal [. . of] darkness, and do not remove it till the end of time! For (now) swift taunts eagle, and vultures' voice sings (or: responds); st[ork(?)] ...] the children of the n[is] and lacerates the young of the heron; swallow tears at dove and sparrow [.....] the stick, and in place of the ewes it is the rod that is driven; hares eat [wo]lf(?), beetle[s(?)]] drink must, and hyenas hearken to reproof; f[ox]-cubs [.....] laughs at the wise; and the poor woman mixes myrrh, while the

¹⁸ R. H. Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria*, New Haven 1935, nos. 22 rev. 1-5 and 39 4-7, both from the reign of Assurbanipal; for earlier examples see EA 266, 292, 296. Cf. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 208-10.

priestess [.....] for the chieftain a loincloth of (mere) threads(?) ... the deaf hear from afar." ¹⁹

The darkening of the sun here is not the brief darkening of an eclipse; it is to be extinguished once and for all. The governing idea seems to be that the world is in such a topsy-turvy state that the gods have resolved to turn the lights out on it for ever. This is not at all the situation in Archilochus. But there is enough in this Semitic text to make us suspect that in linking the darkening of the sun to inversions of animal behaviour, Archilochus was following some older literary model.

In fr. 125, spoiling for a scrap with someone, Archilochus says 'I crave the fight with you, as if thirsting to drink'. The simile is paralleled centuries earlier in the Tukulti-Ninurta epic, in a description of the furious battle between the Assyrians and the Kassites: 'and in the eyes of the warriors (it seemed that) as on the day of thirst, they were salting themselves with death' ²⁰

We now come to what was clearly Archilochus' most famous poem in antiquity, the epode in which he remonstrated with Lycambes for having reneged on his agreement to marry his daughter to the poet:

You've turned your back on the great bond
of salt and table.

The fact of having eaten together is considered to create a bond. In the Near East, as in Greece, a shared meal was an important confirmation of a treaty or agreement. The specific reference to salt recalls Semitic practice. Hebrew cereal offerings were seasoned with salt that was 'the salt of the covenant before God'. In Arabic idiom 'salt' stands for the food shared, even if it was only milk and had no salt in it. A man bound to another by this bond would say 'There is salt between us'. ²¹

Archilochus went on to tell Lycambes an animal fable. We have met this oriental genre once already in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and the reader may care to refer back to what was said about it in that context (pp. 319 f.). With the seventh-century iambographers it seems to have become a favourite recourse. We know of two examples in Archilochus' epodes (the second is the fable of the fox and the monkey, fr. 185-7 = Aesop. 81 Perry), and another in Semonides (fr. 9 = Aesop. 443 P.).

The present one, the fable of the eagle and the fox (or rather vixen), has a very similar plot to the story of the eagle and the snake in *Etana*,

and is surely related to it. Archilochus' story, so far as we can reconstruct it from the fragments with the help of the later Aesopic version, runs as follows. ²² An eagle and a fox became friends and neighbours. But one day, when the fox was away, the eagle flew down and carried off (one of?) its cubs to feed its own young. Its nest was on a high crag which the fox had no means of reaching. The fox appealed to Zeus, god of justice in the animal world as in the human, to right the wrong. The prayer was answered. To provide its young with another meal, the eagle seized part of the sacrificial victim from an altar and carried it back to the nest, failing to notice that it was smouldering. The wind fanned it into flame, the nest burned, and the unfledged young had no escape.

According to the story told in *Etana* an eagle and a snake took up residence respectively at the top and at the base of a poplar. The eagle proposed that they be friends. The snake thought badly of the eagle's character, and insisted on an oath being sworn before Shamash, the Sun-god who was the Babylonians' god of justice. This was duly done, and the friendship was established. Both creatures produced young. Whatever prey either of them caught, it shared with the other family. But when the eagle's young had grown big, it decided to devour the snake's young, and announced its intention to its offspring. One of the young eagles warned his father against the transgression, which Shamash was sure to punish. But the bad old bird would not listen. It flew down and ate the young snakes, whose parent was out hunting. When the parent snake returned and found its nest empty, it made a tearful appeal to Shamash, pointing out that its nest was gone whereas the eagle's was safe, and calling upon the god to punish the wrongdoer. Shamash answered, and told the snake to follow the path over the mountain, where it would find a captive wild bull. It should slit open the bull's body and hide inside it. The eagle would come down and delve into the carcass in search of the tenderest flesh. Then the snake should seize it, pull out all its wing feathers so that could not fly, and throw it into a deep pit to starve. The snake followed this excellent stratagem, and the eagle was caught. ²³

Originally this must have been a self-contained moral story; but it has been absorbed into the tale of *Etana*, king of Kish. The eagle becomes the one that carried *Etana* to heaven. Shamash, to help the pious but childless *Etana*, tells him that there is this eagle trapped in a pit, who will assist him to obtain the plant of birth. *Etana* finds the eagle and

¹⁹ Hackett, 25, 27, 29, whose interpretations I have followed in essentials.

²⁰ *Tuk.-Nin.* v A 52; Foster, 226 (who construes differently, but the point is not affected).

²¹ Archil. 173; Lev. 2. 13, Num. 18. 19; Robenson Smith, 270, cf. 479; P. Karavites, (as ch. I, n. 72), 179-87.

²² Archil. 174-81, Aesop. 1 P.; West (1974), 132-4, and ZPE 45, 1982, 30 f.

²³ *Etana* (SBV) II-III and corresponding portions of the Old Babylonian and Middle Assyrian versions (ANET 114-18, 517; Dalley, 191-8; Foster, 440-6, 451-6); compared with Archilochus by R. J. Williams, *Phoenix* 10, 1956, 70-7, and others; Burkert (1992), 121 f.

tends it until it is able to fly again. It then searches the land for the place of birth. Having no success, it suggests taking him up to see the gods. The contradictory behaviour of Shamash in cancelling the eagle's punishment, which he himself designed, is sufficient indication that the combination of the eagle-and-snake story with that of Etana is secondary.

Although the Greek story has a fox instead of the snake, it proceeds along virtually identical lines up to the dénouement. The eagle's come-uppance takes a different form; its young perish, being still too immature to fly, whereas in the Babylonian version they have grown big, are unaffected by their father's capture, and presumably survive to live their own lives. Yet there is still a similarity: in both stories it is the bird's greed for meat and its imprudent choice of cadaver that brings about its undoing.²⁴

Archilochus refers to the eagle's young as its *παῖδες*, 'sons' or 'children', a term not normally used in the case of animals.²⁵ This is matched in *Etana*, where the young of both the serpent and the eagle are repeatedly called their 'sons' (*mārū*). In Akkadian the usage is not quite so exceptional as in Greek, though it more usual to use the specialized terms appropriate to each species.

The fox's prayer to Zeus in fr. 177 is especially interesting.

ὦ Ζεῦ, πάτερ Ζεῦ, σὸν μὲν οὐρανοῦ κράτος,
σὺ δ' ἔργ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων ὁρᾷς
λεωργὰ καὶ θεμιστά, σοὶ δὲ θηρίων
ὕβρις τε καὶ δίκη μέλει.

'Zeus, father Zeus, thine is the power in heaven,
and thou dost oversee
men's deeds, wicked and lawful; all creatures' rights
and wrongs are thy concern.'

'Thine is the power in heaven' will remind many of the Lord's Prayer, but the formula goes back to the Old Testament, appearing in a prayer attributed to David (1 Chr. 29. 11): 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power ... for all in the heavens and in the earth is thine ...'. The structure of the fox's prayer as a whole—apostrophe of the god, statement of his power and his special concern for justice, remonstrance about the eagle's transgression (for this must have followed)—is equally

²⁴ Another version appears in Egyptian, but only in a papyrus of the first or second century AD: W. Spiegelberg, *Der ägyptische Mythos vom Sonnenauge*, Strassburg 1917, 12–17; M. Treu, *Archilochos*, Munich 1959, 231 f. The protagonists are a cat and a vulture. The ending is very similar to that in the Aesopic version, and it looks as if it was derived from that source.

²⁵ Fr. 179 and probably 175. 1. The only parallels known to me from Greek of the Classical period are Aesch. Ag. 50 (influenced by Archilochus: CQ 29, 1979, 1–3) and Eur. Cycl. 41.

in accord with Near Eastern tradition. Compare Tukulti-Ninurta's complaint to Shamash in the epic:²⁶

'O Shamash, lord [], I have kept your oath, I have feared your
greatness ...
You are the hero who since aforetime were our fathers' unchanging
judge,
and who now oversees our loyalty, the god who sets aright, you are he.
Why then since aforetime has the Kassite king contravened your
design and judgment?
He has not feared your oath, he has transgressed your command, he
has schemed falsehood;
he has committed crimes against you, Shamash. Be my judge!'

The idea that Zeus concerns himself with justice among animals is without parallel in Archaic Greek literature, and indeed directly contradicted by Hesiod, for whom the possession of Zeus-given justice distinguishes mankind from beasts, birds, and fishes.²⁷ It has a remarkable precedent in the great Hittite hymn to the Sun-god Istanu:²⁸

When in the morning Istanu rises in the sky,
then on the upper lands and the lower lands, all of them, comes
your illumination, Istanu.
You are the one that judges the case of the dog and the pig;
the animals' case, that do not speak with the mouth, you judge;
the evil and wicked man's case you, Istanu, do judge.

Gernot Wilhelm suggests that the mention of the dog and pig is an allusion to a fable. There are two short fables in the Aesopic collection (222–3 Perry) about disputes between a bitch and a sow, and in one of them, where they are quarrelling about ease of parturition, the punch-line is the old Mesopotamian proverb about the bitch in her haste bearing blind puppies. Possibly, then, there was once an oriental fable similarly based on the proverb, but with Shamash acting as arbitrator between the bitch and the sow.

²⁶ *Tuk.-Nin.* ii A 13'–21' (Foster, 215).

²⁷ *Op.* 276–80. Aeschylus takes up the Archilochean idea at Ag. 55–9; cf. above, n. 25. Aeschylus' simile, like Archilochus' fable, is an image of the human world and requires the gods to act accordingly.

²⁸ CTH 372 i 39–46, TUAT ii. 797; imitated in the prayer of Muwatalli, CTH 381 iii 15–17 (ANET 398).

Another Archilochenn passage, where the poet spoke of the wall being 'fattened' by the blood of men killed in battle, has been discussed in an earlier chapter (pp. 236 f.).

ELEGY

Of the various Greek poetic forms of the Archaic age, elegy is the medium of moral and ethical reflection. Most of the Near Eastern parallels to be noted in the present section will fall into this category. A large proportion of them come from the Old Testament.

Callinus

Our main fragment of this poet is an exhortation to the Ephesians to rouse themselves and show courage in the defence of their territory. The passage in which he argues that men should not worry about being killed, since the date of their death is predetermined by fate (l. 8-13), has been cited in the note on *Iliad* 12 322-8 (p. 381). In the succeeding lines he observes that the man who avoids battle is scorned by his people:

Oft a man flees the carnage and the clattering
of javelins; death catches him at home;
but such as him the people do not love or miss.

A similar sentiment had been expressed a century or two before in *Erra and Ishum* (I 51-3):

Going to the field is appropriate for young men, it is like a festival.
He who sits in town, though he be a prince, does not get his fill of bread:
he is vilified in the mouth of his people, his head is (reckoned) slight.

Mimnermus

Mimnermus' reflections on human life in fr. 2 begin with a conjunction of two oriental commonplaces which we have already considered elsewhere:

But we are like the leaves that flowery spring
puts forth, quick spreading in the sun's warm light:
just like them for a brief span we enjoy
youth's flowers, with no knowledge from the gods
of either good or ill.

For the comparison of our brief life to that of summer's leaves see the note on *Iliad* 6. 146-9 (p. 365); for the idea that the gods have withheld from us all knowledge of good and evil see pp. 118 f.

Elsewhere Mimnermus uses a different image for the transience of youth: he calls it 'short-lived as a dream'. The simile already appears in Egyptian literature of the second millennium. An Instruction text of the Middle Kingdom warns against dalliance with beautiful women: 'a short moment like a dream, then death comes for having known them'. Another poet, around 1300, writes 'As for the span of earthly affairs, it is the manner of a dream'.²⁹

In fr. 12 Mimnermus describes the eternal course of the Sun-god and his steeds, no doubt to contrast it with the numbered days of man, as Catullus does.³⁰ The horses and chariot of the Sun seem to have been a new concept in Greece in the seventh century. We do not find them in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* (though Dawn is given horses in one passage), but they occur several times in the Homeric Hymns, and the poet of the *Cyclic Titanomachy* specified that there were two male and two female steeds.³¹ The idea certainly came to Greece from outside, and presumably from the East, though it is difficult to determine its place of origin. The light, spoke-wheeled chariot which horses could pull was a Middle Eastern invention of the early second millennium; it reached Mycenaean Greece in the sixteenth century. But it is possible that some peoples had previously imagined the Sun riding in an ox-cart with block wheels. There are a few allusions in Sumerian poetry to his having a yoked team of some kind as early as the *Cylinders of Gudea* (22nd century). In a hymnic incantation dated to the seventeenth century it is said to consist of four lions with different monstrous faces. In the fourteenth-century Hittite hymn to the Sun-god, which draws heavily on Babylonian motifs, there is reference to his having harnessed four (animals of unspecified sort). An Assyrian text lists nine storm-demons as the yoke-creatures of Shamash. The god Bunene is sometimes called Shamash's charioteer. In a late Babylonian text he is celebrated as 'Bunene, whose counsel is good, the charioteer who sits on the car-bench ... harnesser of the valiant mules whose knees do not tire as they go and

²⁹ Mimn. 5. 4; *Instruction of Ptahhotep* 287 (Lichtheim, i. 68); 'Song of the Harper', M. Lichtheim, *JNES* 4, 1945, 197. Cf. Job 20 8, of the wicked: 'he will fly away like a dream and they will not find him'. Pindar was to say that man is 'the dream of a shadow' (*Pyth.* 8. 95).

³⁰ *Carm.* 5. 4-6, *sôlēs occidere et redire possunt: nobis, cum semel excidit brevis lux, nox est perpetua una dormienda*. For a passage from the Old Babylonian *Gilgamesh* that implies a similar antithesis see p. 121. Cf. also *HSCP* 73, 1968, 130.

³¹ *Od.* 23. 244-6; *Hymn. Dem.* 63, 88, *Herm.* 69, *Hymn. Hom.* 28. 14, 31. 9, 15; *Titanom.* fr. 7 B. = 4 D.

return'.³² None of these texts refer to horses. However, there were sacred horses of Shamash at Sippar in the Neo-Babylonian period together with a chariot with gold reins and other equipment of silver and bronze. It was just about in Mimmernus' time that Josiah, the king of Judah, abolished his predecessors' practice of dedicating horses and chariots to the Sun.³³ By this period the concept of the Sun's horse-drawn car had spread far beyond the Near East: it appears in the *Rgveda* and *Avesta*, and the wheeled bronze horse drawing a gilt bronze sun disc found at Trundholm in Denmark attests its arrival in northern Europe by the thirteenth century BC.³⁴

Mimmernus speaks of the Sun's unending 'toil' (πόνος), from which he and his horses never get any rest once Dawn has gone up into the sky. He proceeds to describe how the Sun travels through the night to return to his starting-point. These ideas are anticipated in Egyptian and Middle Babylonian hymns to the Sun god:

A brief day—and thou racest a course of millions and hundred-thousands of leagues . . . So also thou has completed the hours of the night: thou hast regulated it without a pause coming in thy labours.

To unknown, distant regions and for leagues beyond counting,
Shamash, you rest not as you go by day and return by night:
there is none among all the Igigi who is (so) strenuous, apart from you.³⁵

Solon

In fr. 4. 1–8 Solon claims that so far as the gods are concerned, Athens has nothing to fear, because Athena holds her protecting hands over the city; but the citizens themselves are doing their best to destroy it by their folly and iniquity. He goes on to describe their misdeeds. They enrich themselves dishonestly, sparing neither sacred nor public property,

³² Gudea A xiv 26, xix 16 (Jacobsen, 406, 412); hymnic incantation to Utu, G. R. Castellino, *Oriens Antiquus* 8 1969, 14–17, lines 89–100; CTH 372 i 52–6 (H. G. Güterbock, *JAOS* 78, 1958, 240; *TUAT* ii 797), KAV 64 iv 16–24; prayers of Nabonidus to Shamash, Langdon, 260. 33–5 (Falkenstein-von Soden, 289, Seux. 520; Foster, 753).

³³ T. G. Pinches, *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 60, 1928, 132 f.; 2 Ki. 23, 11. A late Jewish text in which the solar chariot appears is 1 *Enoch*, 72. 5 and 37.

³⁴ P. Gelling and H. E. Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun*, London 1969, 14 ff.; P. V. Glob, *The Mound People*, London 1974, 99–103; Miranda Green, *The Sun-Gods of Ancient Europe*, London 1991, 64–6, 114 f.

³⁵ Theban hymn, *ANET* 368; Shamash Hymn 43–5 (*BWL* 128; *ANET* 388; Foster, 538). Cf. also Bunene's 'valiant mules whose knees do not tire' in the Nabonidus prayer cited above. Similarly of the Moon-god in a second-millennium Sumero-Akkadian bilingual hymn: 'the swift-footed steer whose knees do not tire' (E. G. Perry, *Hymnen und Gebete an Sin* [LSS ii. 4], Leipzig 1907, 2. 38 f.; Falkenstein-von Soden, 223). Homer calls the sun 'tireless' (ἀκόμας).

falling to safeguard Dike, following lawlessness instead of maintaining law and order. The antithesis between divine benevolence and the human wickedness which negates it is well paralleled in Trito-Isaiah (19. 1 ff.):

Behold, the hand of Yahweh is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear,
except that your wrongdoings are a cause of separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have concealed his face
from you, from hearing.
For your hands are defiled with blood . . .
There is none who pleads honestly,
and none who goes to law in sincerity . . .
Their deeds are deeds of harm,
and acts of violence are in their hands.

At line 28 of the same fragment Solon says that the public evil (δημόσιον κακόν) comes home to each individual, leaps the wall of his yard, and 'finds' him (εὑρε), even if he takes refuge in his inmost room. Hebrew regularly uses the verb *māṣā* 'find' in a similar way, with evil or adversity as its subject.³⁶ The graphic portrayal of the evil as a demon who invades the house may be compared with Jer. 9. 20(21),

For Death has come up into our windows, it has entered our citadels.

A few lines later Solon uses more language that reminds us of Old Testament poetry and prophecy. Praising the power of Eunomia, he says that she 'makes the rough (places) smooth' (τραχέα λειαίνει), and that she 'withers the growing flowers of Ate'. The withering of the wicked has been illustrated on p. 308; the other image recalls Deutero-Isaiah,

And the uneven ground shall be level,
and the rugged places a valley-plain.³⁷

Fragment 9 is a classic example of the figure known as a priamel, where a series of parallel statements serves to throw the last into relief:

From the cloud comes the fury of snow and hail;
from the bright lightning comes thunder;
and from big men a city is destroyed.

³⁶ Gen. 44. 34, Exod. 18. 8, Deut. 31. 21, 2 Ki. 7. 9, Job 31. 29, etc.

³⁷ Isa. 40. 4, cf. 42. 16.

The suggestion is that the one leads to the other in the last case just as surely as in the first two. Jewish wisdom provides remarkably close parallels:

The north wind brings forth rain,
and a backbiting tongue, a cursed(?) face.

Before the thunder, the lightning runs ahead,
and before the shamefaced man shall go favour.³⁸

The longest surviving piece of Solon, probably a complete elegy, is fr. 13. He begins with a prayer to the Muses in which he asks for 'fortune' (ὄλβος) from the gods and good reputation from men; to be liked and respected by his friends, hated and feared by his enemies. We find similar sentiments in some Akkadian prayers:

Destine my good fortune,
[bestow] your great abundance, [establi]sh over me your
great livelihood;
may [god,] king, lord, prince es[teem me] ...
may the praise of me be established in the people's mouth.

May the content of my days be good fortune;
grant me a good reputation;
may my utterance be found pleasing in the street.³⁹

Solon's prayer develops into an ethical discourse. The works of unrighteousness do not last long, he declares.

Zeus supervises every outcome. Suddenly
like a spring wind he sweeps the clouds away,
a gale that stirs the billowing ocean to its bed
and ravages the tidy fields of wheat
before ascending to the gods' high seat in heaven,
with the clear sky restored to view ...
Such is the punishment of Zeus.

The same simile is used of Yahweh:

³⁸ Prov. 25. 23, Eccles. 32. 10. For other biblical parallels cf. Prov. 26. 3, 27. 3, Amos 3. 3-8, Job 8. 11-13, 28. 1-12; for discussion of the form see W. Kröhl, *Die Priamel (Beispielreihe) als Stilmittel in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung*, Diss. Greifswald 1935; Dornseiff, 379-93.
³⁹ Sol. 13. 3-6; KAR 68 obv. 22-rev. 2 (Ebeling [1953], 22; Seux, 273; Foster, 562 f.); W. Mayer (as ch. 5, n. 155), 507 f. (Seux, 285; Foster, 666).

I have wiped away your disobedience like the clouds
and your sins like the raincloud.

In a series of further passages he is represented as dispelling the wicked like chaff before the wind.⁴⁰

However, Solon continues, Zeus is not quick to anger, like a mortal; he does not react at once to every transgression; yet he never fails to observe who has a guilty heart, and in the end his punishment will come. It does not necessarily fall in a man's lifetime, but in that case it falls upon his innocent children or descendants. Yahweh, similarly, is characterized as 'slow to anger (lit. long of nose) ... but he certainly does not waive punishment, visiting the guilt of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, upon the third and the fourth generation'.⁴¹ This idea that people may have to suffer for the sins of their forebears—a convenient explanation of why sinners sometimes appear to go unpunished, and why disaster sometimes falls upon the innocent—had long enjoyed currency in the Near East. The plague that ravaged Hatti in the late fourteenth century seemed to imply a sinful king, but Mursili II, not being aware of any transgression on his part, assumed that he was having to pay for a sin of his father's: 'That's how it happens, the father's sin comes upon the son. So my father's sin has come upon me.' A Babylonian sufferer prays to Marduk, 'Let no guilt of my father, my father's father, my mother, my mother's mother, my family, kith, or kin, approach myself, but let it go aside'.⁴²

The doctrine that Zeus can see, not just the wickedness done on earth (as in Hesiod, *Op.* 249-69, or Archilochus 177. 2), but that which is in men's hearts, may also be illustrated from Mesopotamia and Israel:

You (Shamash) know the just man, you know the wicked man.

For thou alone knowest the heart of all the children of man.⁴³

The remainder of Solon's poem is mainly taken up by an extended working-out of the thought that men have all kinds of plans and hopes, but none of them knows how things will turn out—that depends on the gods. Semonides and Theognis also meditate on this theme. We find it in the Egyptian *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet* and in the Book of Proverbs:

⁴⁰ Sol. 13. 17-25; Isa. 44. 22; passages cited in the note on *Od.* 5. 328-30; cf. also Jer. 18. 17, Prov. 10. 25.

⁴¹ Sol. 13. 25-32, cf. Thgn. 203-8, 733-42, Eur. fr. 980; Exod. 34. 6 f., Num. 14. 18, cf. Exod. 20. 5, Deut. 5. 9; Brown, 310 f.

⁴² *KUB* xiv. 8 and duplicates (*ANET* 395, *CTH* 378) § 9; Ebeling (1953), 74. 22-4 (Seux, 171; Foster, 592).

⁴³ Sol. 13. 27, cf. Thgn. 375, 898; *OECT* 6. 53. 33 f. (bilingual; Seux, 230); 1 Ki. 8. 39.

One thing are the words which men say,
another is that which the god does.

Many are the designs in the heart of a man,
but the plan of Yahweh is what comes about.⁴⁴

In another fragment Solon reflects that sensory pleasures rather than property are our true wealth:

No one can take all those
possessions with him when he goes to Hades,
nor escape death by offering ransom.

A psalmist makes the same observation in denigrating those who boast of their riches:

To be sure, a man cannot buy himself off, or give God his ransom;
the price of his life is (too) costly, and (his) surcease is for ever ...
Do not be afraid because a man grows rich,
because his house's glory increases,
for he will not take all that away at his death;
his glory will not go down after him.

The idea that 'you can't take it with you' can be traced back to the Egyptian Middle Kingdom. The Harper's Song from the tomb of King Intef has the refrain

Make holiday, do not weary of it!
Lo, none is allowed to take his goods with him,
Lo, none who departs comes back again!⁴⁵

Theognis and the Theognidea

The collection of poems and excerpts preserved under the name of Theognis constitutes the largest body of Archaic elegiac verse that remains to us, some 1400 lines in all. Of these some 300 lines can be ascribed to the historical Theognis of Megara on the basis of internal criteria or pre-Hellenistic attributions. The rest contains, besides some excerpts from Tyrtaeus, Mimnermus, Solon, and probably Euenus, a mass of material that we must treat as anonymous, most of it presumably from the sixth century but some from the early fifth. We may take the whole collection as a representative cross-section of the elegy composed for sympotic and other social settings over this span of time. As such, it

provides the main body of evidence for (aristocratic) popular ethics in this period.

Later editorial activity has seen to it that the collection is headed by a group of addresses to deities. The first is a prayer to Apollo, whom the poet declares he will never forget either at the beginning or the close of his song: he will always hymn him first, last, and in between. This is a motif that occurs in a number of places in early Greek verse,⁴⁶ and it has 'Hittite parallels. I have elsewhere (p. 269) quoted Akkadian poets who at the end of a hymn used the expression 'let me ever sing' (the praises of a god). 'Ever' here translates not an adverb but a frequentative verb form. Several passages in the Hebrew Psalms place more explicit emphasis on the repetition of the song of praise on all suitable occasions:

I will bless Yahweh at every time, his praise continually in my mouth.

So will I sing thy name for ever to pay my vows day by day.

I will sing to Yahweh during my life,
I will melodize to my God as long as I last.⁴⁷

In the excerpt which extends from 53 to 68 Theognis deplores the present state of Megara, with emphasis on the rise of the former lower classes and the prevalence of dishonesty:

They cheat each other, laughing at each other's loss ...
They have embraced deceit and lies and subtleties
like men past all salvation.

Jeremiah complains in similar terms:

And they bend their tongue (like) their bow;
falsehood and not truth prevails in the land ...
And they deceive one another, and do not speak the truth;
they have taught their tongue to tell lies.⁴⁸

Because deceit is rife, Theognis warns against trusting others, even one's friends.

Pretend in speech to be the friend of everyone,
but share with no one anything at all
that matters, or you'll find those wretched characters
cannot be trusted in the reckoning.

Likewise Jeremiah, and Micah before him:

⁴⁶ West (1966), 166 f.

⁴⁷ Ps. 34. 2(1), 61. 9(8), 104. 33 (= 146. 2).

⁴⁸ Thgn. 59, 67 f.; Jer. 9. 2(3)-4(5).

⁴⁴ Sol. 13, 33-70, Sem. 1, Thgn. 133-42; *Amen-em-Opet* 19. 16 (ANET 423); Prov. 19. 21, cf. 16. 9; Brown, 295.

⁴⁵ Sol. 24, 7-9, cf. Thgn. 1187; Ps. 49. 8(7) f., 17(16) f.; Lichtheim, i. 197.

Be on your guard against your fellow,
and do not trust any brother,
for every brother will certainly cheat,
and every fellow go spreading slander.

Do not trust your fellow, do not rely on a familiar.⁴⁹

When there is civil discord, says Theognis, a trustworthy man is worth his weight in gold or silver (77 f.); this concept of weighing a person against gold has been dealt with in the note on *Il.* 22. 351 (pp. 395 f.)

Another couplet of his has a close parallel in the Book of Proverbs:

Cyrus, don't ever talk too big, for no man knows
what change a night and day will bring to him.

Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day will bring forth.⁵⁰

Elsewhere Theognis says that for a poor man it is better to be dead than to live in suffering. A Sumerian proverb expresses the same view. 'When a poor man has died, do not (try to) revive him', which is understood to mean 'a poor man may as well be dead as alive'.⁵¹

Cyrus, to whom these verses are addressed, is assured that thanks to Theognis he will be remembered indefinitely, 'as long as earth and sun endure'. Similarly the epitaph for Midas attributed to Homer or Cleobulus contains the boast that it will remain with its message for passers-by

so long as waters flow and trees grow tall,
and the sun rises and shines, and the radiant moon,
and rivers run, and the sea beats the shore.

Simonides' criticism of these famous lines shows how alien the sentiment was to Classical Greek thinking: 'Who of sound mind could assent to that Lidian, Cleobulus? ... All things yield to the gods: as for a stone, even man's arts can shatter it.' But such formulae for expressing infinite futurity were conventional in the Near East, especially in hopeful auguries of enduring celebrity. In a Hittite curse on a conquered city we read, 'So long as heaven, earth, and mankind (exist), no man in the future shall dwell in it.' The great bilingual Phoenician and Luwian inscription

⁴⁹ Thgn. 63-6, cf. 73-6; Jer. 9. 3(4), Mic. 7. 5.

⁵⁰ Thgn. 159 f.; Prov. 27. 1, compared by Brown, 295. For the idea of overnight change of fortune cf. *Ludhui* II 39 f. (quoted below, p. 528); Thgn. 664, Simon. *PMG* 521, 615, *Soph. Aj.* 131 f., *Eur. fr.* 101, 420, 2, Carcinus *TrGF* 70 F 5a, *Philemon fr.* 178. 12 K.-A., *Dem.* 18. 252 with Wankel's commentary (p. 1109).

⁵¹ Thgn. 181 f., cf. 175 f.; E. I. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs*, 68.

at Kuratepe, dated to around 760, contains the prayer 'may the name of Aštiwada be for ever, like the name of the sun and the moon'. Hebrew court poets were no less extravagant:

May he live together with the sun
and before the moon, generation upon generation ...
May his name live for ever, before the sun may his name endure.

His seed shall live for ever, and his throne like the sun before me;
like the moon it shall be established for ever.

On the temples of Nabu and Sin at Dur-Sharrukin were inscribed prayers to these gods on behalf of Sargon II, which included the clause 'Make his reign last as long as heaven and earth'.⁵²

Among the anonymous Theognidea there is a quatrain that runs:

I'm a fine mare, a winner, but a scoundrel's now
my jockey—this it is that pains me most.
Many a time I've thought of breaking off the bit,
throwing my worthless rider, running free.

Most critics agree that it is not an actual mare that is represented as speaking, but that the animal is a metaphor or allegory. To the question what it represents, various answers have been given, for example a woman, a city, or the human soul. We need not dwell on the problem. The lines need not always have been applied to the same kind of situation. What concerns us here is that there is a Mesopotamian parallel which suggests that this is a version of a traditional commonplace. It appears in Sumerian and Akkadian in a proverb collection from Assurbanipal's library:

I am a riding-donkey,
but I am hitched to a mule:
I (have to) support the wagon
and bear the (driver's) stick.⁵³

One of the longest and most interesting pieces among the anonymous Theognidea is an elegy in which the poet begins by addressing Zeus and remonstrating with him:

⁵² Thgn. 251 f., *Hom. Epigr.* 3, Simon. *PMG* 581; *KUB* vii. 60 iii 18 f. (*CTH* 423); *KAI* 26 = *SSI* iii no. 15 A iv 2-3 = C v 5-7; *Ps.* 72. 5, 17, 89. 37(36) f., cf. *Deut.* 11. 21; B. Meissner, *ZDMG* 98, 1944, 34, 36 (Seux, 528, 530; Foster, 707 f.); cf. Borger, 27 viii 28 f.

⁵³ Thgn. 257-60; *BWL* 242. 25-9, 249 (Foster, 341 f.).

Dear Zeus, I'm quite surprised at you. You're king of all,
the prestige and the power's yours alone;
you understand the heart and mind of every man,
and yours, lord, is the highest majesty:
so how, Zeus, can you bring yourself to treat alike
wrongdoers and the law-abiding man? (etc.)

The pattern has something in common with the one discussed above in connection with the fox's prayer in Archilochus' fable (pp. 504 f.). Instead of remonstrating about the offender who has breached the norms of conduct, this poet takes Zeus to task for failing to operate a system of clear penalties for sin, and asks him for an explanation. Another poem of the same character appears later in the collection. We find very similar dialectic in Hebrew poetry, starting in the latter part of the seventh century.

Thou art purer of eyes than to behold evil,
and art not able to look upon toil:
(so) why dost thou look upon the treacherous,
keep silent when the wicked swallows up the more righteous?

Thou art righteous, Yahweh, when I plead before you,
yet I will discuss judgments with you.
Why is the way of the wicked successful,
and all the treacherous dwell in peace?

If only I knew (where), I would find him,
go all the way to his abode;
I would lay the case out before him
and fill my mouth with objections ...
There, a righteous man arguing it out with him,
I would carry my case safely through once and for all.⁵⁴

The Theognidean poet asks Zeus whether there are no guidelines set by heaven for mortals, no path (ὁδός) that one may follow with the certainty of pleasing the gods. A Babylonian poet had complained many centuries before:

I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to the god.
What is good to oneself is offensive to the god;
what is scandalous in one's heart is good to one's god.
Who can learn the will of the gods within heaven?
Who understands the counsel of the deities of the depths?

⁵⁴ Thgn. 373–400, 731–52; Hab. 1. 13, Jer. 12. 1, Job 23. 3–7; cf. Ps. 58. 2(1) f.

Where have mortals learned the way (*alāktu*) of the god?⁵⁵

A few lines later the Greek poet speaks of men who conduct their affairs 'loving righteousness', τὰ δίκαια φιλεῦντες; the expression recurs in the parallel poem. The same idiom is used in praising seventh-century Assyrian and sixth-century Babylonian kings: they are called *rā'im kintil* or *kitti and/or mēšari*, 'lover of right/justice'.⁵⁶

In the second of the Greek poems the complainant takes issue with the principle of the fathers' sins being visited on the sons, which we had mentioned to notice above in connection with Solon. This poet desires the gods to agree that people should pay for their own transgressions, and that their innocent children should be exempt. Jeremiah (again) looks forward to a similar reform:

In those days (says Yahweh) they will no longer say 'The fathers have eaten unripe fruit, and the children's teeth will get blunted', but a man will die for his guilt: every human who eats the unripe fruit will get his teeth blunted.

Ezekiel develops this at greater length, and makes it explicit that a sinner's innocent son who sees his father's wrongdoing but refrains from copying it will be spared.⁵⁷

The Greek elegist continues with the observation that the existing system, in which the righteous man suffers unjustly, is not calculated to encourage respect for the immortals:

Who else thereafter, when he looks on this man's fate,
will fear the gods, and in what frame of mind?

The idea of the gods' treatment of one person serving as an example to others and prompting them to be more god-fearing may be illustrated from Babylonian prayers in which the speaker has suffered misfortunes that he takes to be punishment for misdeeds. 'May the man who does not fear his god or goddess', he says, 'learn from my example (lit. look to my hand).'⁵⁸

In another Theognideum the man who cannot control his tongue is picturesquely described as having no 'doors' (θύραι) on it. The metaphor is also found in tragedy, but seems colloquial rather than elevated. It is closely paralleled in the Old Testament. Micah advises: 'guard the portals of your mouth (*pithē pīkā*) from her who lies in your

⁵⁵ Thgn. 381 f.; *Ludlul* II 33–8. Cf. also the passages quoted on p. 119.

⁵⁶ Thgn. 385, 739, cf. 465; M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes royales* (as ch. 3, n. 133), 107, 236 f.

⁵⁷ Thgn. 733–42; Jer. 31. 29 f., Ezek. 18. 1–20.

⁵⁸ Thgn. 747 f.; E. Reiner, *JNES* 15, 1956, 142. 51' (Seux, 410; Foster, 667); W. G. Lambert, *JNES* 33, 1974, 274. 34 (Seux, 204; Foster, 641).

bosom', and a psalmist prays that Yahweh will 'keep watch over the door of my lips' (*dal š-pāṭāy*).⁵⁹

In several excerpts the speaker claims moral purity for himself or for his comrade, using the simile of gold which proves its quality under the touchstone and shows no discoloration:

In everything you'll find me like refiner's gold,
still showing orange where the touchstone rubs.
Upon its surface no dark tarnishing or rust
takes hold; it keeps its brightness ever pure.

Once again the imagery is paralleled in Hebrew poetry:

(If) you test my heart, call me to account by night,
assay me, you will not find wickedness in me.

For he knows the path that I follow;
(if) he tests me, I will come out like gold.⁶⁰

In another elegy the assaying of precious metals in the fire is set in parallel, in a kind of priamel, with the different sort of test which reveals the human character:

Of gold and silver, experts make assay by fire,
but wine is what shows up the mind of man.

In the biblical parallel, however, drink yields to the deity:

A crucible for silver, and a furnace for gold,
but the tester of hearts is Yahweh.⁶¹

Have the Greeks replaced God by the grape? I suspect that if we had a corpus of Phoenician secular verse comparable in scope to the Theognidea, we might well find that this saying was current there in the same form as the Greek, and that it was the pious Hebrew who adapted a Canaanite commonplace into a religious dictum.

One of the latest pieces in the Theognidea was composed by a Megarian, possibly Philiadidas, under the threat of Xerxes' invasion of Greece in 480. He prays to Apollo to keep the Medes off, so that when spring comes the citizens may honour the god with hecatombs, paeans, and shouts of joy. Babylonian prayers for deliverance frequently contain, especially as a closing formula, a similar offer of recompense to

the god: 'let me live to sing thy praises'. The motif also appears in Hebrew Psalms:

Be gracious to me, Yahweh, see what I suffer from my enemies,
you that raise me up from the gates of death,
so that I may relate all your praises,
at the gates of the daughters of Zion
I may shout for joy at your deliverance.

Give us life, and we will call upon your name.⁶²

The corollary is 'what use will I be to you dead?'; for this see the note on Aesch. *Cho.* 255-61 in the next chapter, p. 574.

For the next item we return to the genuine Theognis. In some couplets about the consultation of the Delphic oracle he emphasizes to Cyrnus that the man responsible for bringing the god's word back to the city must on no account add anything to it or subtract anything from it. This explicit formulation is exactly paralleled in Deuteronomy, which may be closely contemporary with Theognis, and is at any rate not later. Moses instructs Israel, 'you shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor subtract from it'.⁶³ Moses, like the θεωρός in Theognis, is relaying the word of God to the people. The formula occurs earlier in *Erra and Ishum*: the Babylonian poet avers that he received the text from the god's mouth in his sleep and that in writing it down he 'did not miss anything out, did not add a single line to it'. Earlier still, a virtually identical declaration appears in a Hittite text: 'to this tablet I have not added any word, I have not taken any away'.⁶⁴

Another formula that expresses the idea of strict adherence to the law appears in a number of passages: 'not to turn from it to the right or to the left'. This too has its counterpart in the Theognidean collection: 'I shall go by the rule, dead straight, veering to neither side'.⁶⁵

The following verses are a bitter political comment:

Trample this empty-witted people down, apply
the sharp goad, lay on them the heavy yoke:

⁵⁹ Thgn. 776-9; Seux, 172, 179, 204, 206, 211, 217, 229, 248, 258, 429; Ps. 9. 14(13) f., 80 19(18).

⁶⁰ Thgn. 809 f.; Deut. 4. 2, cf. 13. 1(12. 32), Jer. 26. 2, Prov. 30. 6. Cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (The Anchor Bible, 5), New York 1991, 200.

⁶¹ *Erra* V 43 f.; *KUB* xxxi. 121 (CTH 379; Lebrun, 241) i 7'-10'.

⁶² Thgn. 945 f.; Deut. 5. 32, 17. 11, 20, Josh. 1. 7, 23, 6, 2 Ki. 22. 2, Prov. 4. 27; Esarhaddon's Vassal Treaty (Parpola-Watanabe, 57), lines 632-6, 'If you forsake Esarhaddon ... (and) go to right or left, he who goes to the right, may swords devour him; he who goes to the left, may swords devour him.' (The words for 'right' and 'left' could also mean 'south' and 'north', and Parpola-Watanabe translate them so.)

⁵⁹ Thgn. 421, Soph. *Phil.* 188, Eur. *Or.* 903; Mic. 7. 5, Ps. 141. 3.

⁶⁰ Thgn. 449-52, cf. 416 f., 1105 f.; Ps. 17. 3, Job 23. 10; Brown, 305-7.

⁶¹ Thgn. 499 f.; Prov. 17. 3; Brown, 303. Cf. also Ecclus. 2. 5, 31. 26.

you'll find no people so in love with tyranny
in any land the sun looks down upon.

The metaphor of the 'yoke' of servitude laid upon the neck of a people already occurs in the Old Babylonian hymn to Ishtar for Ammi-ditana where the goddess is said to have harnessed the whole world to the king's yoke. In Assyrian royal inscriptions foreign nations and people are routinely spoken of as submitting to 'my yoke', 'the yoke of my rule', or 'the yoke of Aššur'. The image is also commonplace in the Old Testament.⁶⁶

The initial 'trample' (λάξ ἐπιβα) may be interpreted in the light of the fuller phrase in an anonymous iambic tetrameter,

βαῖνε λάξ ἐπὶ τραχήλου, βαῖνε καὶ πέλα χθονί.

Tread on his/their neck, yes, tread him/them to the ground.

In Mesopotamian art the king's supremacy over his enemies was graphically conveyed by showing him treading on their necks. This symbolic posture, which was no doubt enacted on occasion in real life, is sometimes mentioned in literature. Gudea of Lagash records how he 'set foot on the neck of evil ones and malcontents'. When Marduk agrees to go out and fight Tiamat, he assures Anshar that 'upon Tiamat's neck you will very soon be treading'. And when Joshua captures the five Amorite kings who opposed him at Gibeon, he invites his generals to 'come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings'.⁶⁷

The last of the long excerpts in the Theognidea is a twenty-eight-line piece of philosophizing on the question whether to spend freely and have a good time, with the risk of reducing oneself to a pauper, or to be parsimonious and risk leaving to others the wealth with which one could have had fun oneself. The difficulty is that one cannot foresee how long one is going to live; otherwise one could calculate one's expenditure to suit the time available. The poem is one of the latest in the collection, to be dated to the fifth century. This is the earliest appearance of the topic in Greek. But the dilemma had been tersely formulated in a Sumerian and Akkadian proverb attested in the same collection that was cited earlier: *pīqa amātman, lūkul; pīqa aballut, luškun*, 'should I be dying, I would consume; should I live, I would store'.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Thgn. 847–50; Ammi-ditana hymn, 52; *AHW* and *CAD* s.vv. *abšānu* and *nīru*; Gen. 27. 40, Lev. 26. 13, Deut. 28. 48, 1 Ki. 12. 4, Is. 10. 27, 47. 6, 58. 6, Jer. 2. 20, 27. 8, 11 f., 28. 2 ff., etc.; Brown, 283.

⁶⁷ Adesp. iamb. 36; Gudea B xviii 11 (Jacobsen, 440); *En. el.* II 146; Josh. 10. 24, cf. Ps. 110. 1; E. Fraenkel on Aesch. Ag. 907.

⁶⁸ Thgn. 903–30; *BWL* 244. 42–5, 250.

In setting out his argument the poet uses the device of saying 'I have seen a man who ...' (illustrating the danger of the one policy), 'and I have seen another who ...' (illustrating the danger of the other). This has several parallels in Hebrew wisdom literature.

I have seen a wicked man, a bully,
flaunting himself like the cedars of Lebanon;
and he passed on, and lo, he was no more.

I have seen a fool putting out roots.⁶⁹

The elegy ends with the observation that if you are rich you have many friends, but if you are poor you have few. This is a commonplace with several parallels within the Theognidea, and at least two in the Book of Proverbs:

Even by his fellow a poor man is hated,
but the rich man's friends are many.

Wealth adds many friends,
but the poor man is cut off from his friend.⁷⁰

Another anonymous quatrain runs:

While I alone was drinking from the spring's dark flow,
its water, as I thought, was sweet and good.
But now it's dirtied, other waters running in:
I'll leave this river, drink of another spring.

The spring that was pure and is now contaminated is doubtless a metaphor for a lover—in the context of the Theognidea most probably a boy. Again the imagery is paralleled in Proverbs:

Drink water from your (own) cistern, streams from within your well:
will your springs run outside, (your) watercourses in the plazas?
Let them be for you alone, and none for others beside you.
Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.⁷¹

In another excerpt an elegist, urging endurance upon himself, remarks that a mortal cannot easily evade the destiny laid on him by the gods, 'either by diving to the purple ocean's bed, or when he's caught in misty Tartarus'. We can compare:

⁶⁹ Thgn. 915–22; Ps. 37. 35, Job 5. 3, cf. Prov. 7. 6 ff., 26. 12 (v.l.).

⁷⁰ Thgn. 929 f., cf. 79–82, 299, 697 f., 857–60, Democritus B 101, 106; Prov. 14. 20 (compared by Bogan, 393), 19. 4 (compared by Brown, 293).

⁷¹ Thgn. 959–62; Prov. 5. 15–18, compared by Brown, 296.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither flee from thy face?
 If I climb to heaven, thou art there;
 or I spread my pallet in Sheol, behold—thou!
 I raise the wings of the dawn,
 or make my dwelling at the end of the sea:
 there too thy hand will lead me, thy right hand will hold me.⁷²

The difference between the two passages reflects the basic difference of religious outlook between the two peoples: the Greek thinks in terms of good and bad 'gifts' from the gods, the Hebrew in terms of the all-encompassing divine presence. What they have in common is the idea that man cannot get beyond God's reach however far he goes, whether to the extremities of the sea or to the world of the dead. In an earlier text one of the Amarna Letters, we find a vassal using similar language in reference to his dependence on his king: 'Should we go up into the sky, or should we go down into the netherworld, our head is in your hand.'⁷³

The following verses bring us once more into the world of personal relationships in the close-knit society of Archaic Greece:

Now I take wing and soar free, like a bird that breaks
 the knavish fowler's noose and flies away
 from off the lake. You've lost my friendship; and in time
 you'll recognize how sensible I was.

We cannot reconstruct the exact situation, but the point of interest here is the simile, which is closely matched in a psalm of thanksgiving for Israel's deliverance from some military peril:

We have escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare:
 the snare is broken, and we have escaped.⁷⁴

A few pages back we considered a poem in which Theognis lamented the prevalence of deceit and dishonesty in his city. Later in the corpus we find another, anonymous elegy in which similar sentiments are expressed in more dramatic terms. The moral decline is represented as affecting the whole world. Hope is the only beneficent deity remaining among mankind, the rest have withdrawn to Olympus.

The mighty goddess Trust is gone, Restraint is gone,
 and Chanty's departed from the earth.
 No longer can you trust in men's judicial oaths,
 and nobody respects the immortal gods;

⁷² Thgn. 1033-6; Ps. 139. 7-10.

⁷³ EA 264. 17-19, trs. Moran.

⁷⁴ Thgn. 1097-1100; Ps. 124. 7, cf. Prov. 6. 5.

the moral man's a vanished breed; morality
 and ancient law are recognized no more.

The passage recalls Micah:

The loyal man has vanished from the earth,
 and the righteous does not exist among mankind.

The prophet goes on to describe how everyone is dedicated to evil and intent on doing his neighbour down. Judges expect bribes; no one can be trusted, however close the ties. Micah, however, will look to Yahweh; he will wait for the God of his salvation, who will surely hear him and save him. This has its counterpart in the Greek poet's recommendation that any pious man who may still be alive should wait upon hope, pray to the gods, and sacrifice to Hope both first and last.⁷⁵

From the amatory poems gathered at the end of the Theognidea two small details may be noticed. One of the poets tells his reluctant young friend to bear in mind that the flower of youth passes *ώκύτερον σταδίου*, quicker than a foot-race. Again there is a biblical parallel:

My days are swifter than a runner: they flee; they see no good.⁷⁶

The other passage is a general proposition:

Lad-lovers always wear a stern yoke on their necks.

We have met the 'yoke' metaphor in the context of enslaved peoples. We meet it here in a rather different application. A parallel is to be found in a Sumerian-Akkadian proverb collection (not the same one as previously cited) of which several copies are known from Assurbanipal's library and an older one from Aššur: 'When you love, you also bear a yoke.'⁷⁷

Lastly, it will be convenient to deal here with an unattributed pentameter that is not transmitted in the Theognidean collection but has been preserved by a paroemiographer:

The watchman must keep his watch; the lover must love.

It refers to the divergent interests of two men who are liable to run into one another in the street at dead of night: the watchman making his rounds, and the clandestine lover. The juxtaposition of the two seems to have been a motif of oriental love poetry. Here are some verses from a Sumerian poem:

⁷⁵ Thgn. 1135-50; Mic. 7. 2-10.

⁷⁶ Thgn. 1305 f.; Job 9. 25.

⁷⁷ Thgn. 1357; BWL 227. 21 f., 230 (Foster, 338). Other examples of 'yoke' applied to personal burdens are *Theodicy* 74 (of service to a god) and Lam. 1. 14, 3. 27 (transgressions).

O our son-in-law, as you let night fall ...
 I unfasten for you bolt and pure lock
 from the door! Run! Come quickly!
 There is the (watch on its) round of the wall!
 When the patrol has passed,
 O our son-in-law, when the patrol has gone to rest,
 seize the twilight by the hand ...
 Come to our house quickly!

In two passages in the Song of Songs the woman is represented as going out into the town to look for her lover and encountering the watchmen. In one she asks them if they have seen him; in the other they beat her and take her mantle.⁷⁸

THE MELIC POETS

Alcman

Almost the first intelligible sentence in the Louvre Partheneion is 'Let no man fly up to heaven'. A Greek commonplace, but also, as we have pointed out elsewhere, a Mesopotamian one.⁷⁹

Two strophes later Hagesichora is said to stand out in her choir like a champion racehorse among sheep. To the horse's more conventional epithets is appended the unusual qualification 'one from those under-rock dreams', that is, the sort you might dream of while taking a noonday nap in the shade of a rock. No Greek parallels earlier than Alexandrian poetry have been adduced for the use of 'dream-like' to convey the idea of something especially fine or wonderful. From Mesopotamia we may cite a bilingual hymn from Nippur in which there is reference to 'my temple which is built like (one which one sees in) a dream'.⁸⁰

In a subsequent image, sheep no more, the choir-girls sing that

in myself

I'm just a maid that vainly hoots
 like the owl from the roof-beam.

The simile is faintly reminiscent of the one with which the sufferer in the 102nd Psalm portrays his desolate cries of pain:

⁷⁸ Adesp. eleg. 26; Jacobsen, 90; Cant. 3. 3, 5. 7. In PMG 976 Δέδυκε μὲν ἃ σελάννα, the song of the woman lying alone, the phrase παρὰ δ' ἔρχεθ' ὥρα has been taken by some to refer to the passing of a watchman.

⁷⁹ Alcman, 1. 16, above, p. 121. References to the melic poets (apart from Sappho, Alcaeus, Pindar, and Bacchylides) will be to the continuous numeration in PMGP/PMGF.

⁸⁰ Alcman, 1. 49, cf. A. R. 2. 206, [Theoc.] 9. 16; Oppenheim (1956), 228.

From the sound of my mourning my bones stick to my flesh.
 I am like a qā 'ār [species of owl?] of the desert,
 I am as a screech-owl of the waste ground;
 I lie sleepless, and I am as an isolated bird on a roof.⁸¹

From a papyrus commentary (PMGF 5) we glean some fragmentary information about a poem in which Alcman 'physiologized' and presented some sort of lyric cosmogony. We can see that it did not stand in the Hesiodic tradition but had a very individual character. At the same time it had some features that recall Semitic cosmogonies, particularly the one in Genesis. According to the commentator, Alcman considered the original state of the world to have been a confused, unformed mass. Then the goddess Thetis came into being, and she somehow brought the world into shape. The abstractions Poros and Tekmor, roughly 'Passage' and 'Boundary', also appeared, and Darkness, which was followed by Day and the Moon and Stars. At this point the papyrus breaks off.

The part played by Thetis rather suggests that the initial confused mass, which the philosophical commentator has reduced to undefined 'matter', was of watery nature. This would be one point of contact with Semitic cosmogony, for *Enūma eliš* begins with the cosmic waters mixed in one body before heaven and earth were named, while in Genesis there was darkness upon the deep, and the upper and lower waters had to be separated by a firmament before any dry land appeared out of the lower ones.

A second point of contact is the active part played by a divinity. Alcman seems to have given Thetis a role analogous to that of God in the Hebrew account; at any rate, the commentator says that she was like the craftsman who fashions an artefact out of the material before him. In the Babylonian poem Marduk makes the heaven and the earth from Tiamat's body. In the Phoenician inscription from Karatepe the gods invoked include 'l qn 'rs, 'El creator of the earth', and this Canaanite figure appears centuries earlier as 'Elkunirša' in a Hittite narrative text.⁸² The idea of a divine creator is by no means peculiar to the Semites, but it is as normal among them as it is abnormal in early Greece. A female demiurge such as Thetis is admittedly singular in either context. One may wonder whether she does not owe something to Tiamat as the embodiment of the primeval deep, even though the role she plays is a different one.⁸³

⁸¹ Alcman, 1. 85-7; Ps. 102. 6(5)-8(7).

⁸² KAI 26 A iii 18 (SSI iii. 52 f.) (= Gen. 14. 19); CTH 342 (Hoffner, 69 f.).

⁸³ On Alcman's cosmogony cf. my earlier treatments in CQ 13, 1963, 154-6; 17, 1967, 1-7; West (1971), 206-8.

In another fragment Alcmæon refers to divine creation in a more casual way:

Of seasons he created three,
summer, winter, and autumn the third—
and for a fourth the spring.

The subject of 'he created' is not recorded, but it was presumably either Zeus or 'God'. In this instance a more precise Hebrew parallel can be quoted: 'summer and winter, thou didst form them'. In the course of Marduk's creation

he determined the year and delineated its divisions;
for the twelve months he stationed three stars each,

which is not quite the same as creating the seasons but tends the same way.⁸⁴

Sappho

In a striking manifesto Sappho identifies the object of the heart's desire, whatever it may be, as the most beautiful of sights:

Some say a troop of horse, some infantry,
and some declare a fleet the finest sight
upon the earth; but I say, what one loves.

The troop of horse (ἰππῶν στρότος) is to be understood as chariotry; when at the end of the poem Sappho harks back to the beginning, she affirms that she would rather set eyes on Anactoria than on Lydian chariots and foot-soldiers in all their armour. Her priamel corresponds to one used by a Hebrew psalmist, except that his has a more pious punch-line:

These of chariotry, and these of horses,
but we of the name of Yahweh will make remembrance.⁸⁵

As in the case of the Theognidean priamel about assaying gold, silver, and the mind of man (499 f., above, p. 518), the biblical parallel does not necessarily represent the primary version, given the propensity of the Hebrew poets to adapt traditional material to the glory of Yahweh. Sappho's version is not necessarily original either.

⁸⁴ Alcm. 20; Ps. 74. 17; *En. el.* V 3 f.

⁸⁵ Sappho 16. 1-4; Ps. 20. 8(7), compared by A. P. Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets*, London 1983, 282. The fragments of Sappho and Alcaeus are cited according to the numeration of Voigt; where this differs from that of Lobel and Page, their numbers are added in brackets.

Her most famous fragment is the one in which she lists the physical symptoms that affect her when she looks at a certain person:

Speech fails me,
my tongue is crippled, a subtle fire
is straightway running beneath my skin,
with my eyes I see nothing, and my ears buzz,
the sweat pours down me, a trembling
seizes my whole body, I am greener
than grass: I seem to myself little short of dead.

Such recitals are commonplace in Semitic poetry, not in the context of love, but in prayers for deliverance from sufferings presumed to be due to divine hostility or an evil demon. Here is one Babylonian example:

My eyes bulge but see not, my ears are open but hear not;
my whole body has been gripped by weakness,
a stroke has fallen upon my flesh;
stiffness has seized my arms, debility has fallen upon my knees;
my feet have forgotten how to move;
[a seizure] has overtaken me, I suffocate in a collapsed state:
signs of death have clouded my face.

Half a dozen similar passages could be quoted. They are also to be found among the Hebrew Psalms:

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are dislocated;
my heart is like wax, it is melted within me.
My strength is dried up like fired clay,
and my tongue is stuck to my palate:
you set me on the dust of death.

For my loins are full of burning,
and there is no sound place in my flesh ...
My heart throbs, my strength deserts me,
and the light of my eyes also is absent from me ...
And like a deaf man I do not hear,
and like a dumb man I do not open my mouth.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Sappho 31. 7-16; *Ludlul* II 73-81, cf. W. G. Lambert, *AJO* 19, 1959/60, 50-2 (Seux 194, 197; Foster, 515-17); id., *JNES* 33, 1974, 274 (Seux, 200; Foster, 554); Ebeling (1931), 139 (Seux, 419); Ps. 22. 15(14) f., 38. 8(7)-14(13) (following the Syriac text in the last verse; other versions have 'he does not open his mouth'). Similarly later in the Qumran psalm 1QH 14 (Vermes, [as ch. 2, n. 106], 189).

If we had more love poetry from the ancient Near East, we might perhaps find examples of such litanies of affliction being transferred to the cosmic sphere. Sappho will hardly have been the first to do this. In any case it is difficult to dissociate her lines from the series of Semitic parallels.

Her song appears to have ended with the hopeful reflection that God is always capable of producing a sudden reversal of fortunes, making the poor man rich or vice versa. The Babylonian poet quoted above had observed similarly, a few lines before embarking on the recital of his physical afflictions from which the above excerpt is taken, that the gods' will is inscrutable, and that

He who lived yesterday dies today;
suddenly he is anxious, soon he is rollicking.
In the nip of a nose he is singing in triumph,
in a stride he is groaning like a lamentation-priest.

In the *Theodicy* the sufferer's friend advises him to 'look for the god's [v.l.: the gods'] kindly wind: what you lost over a year, you will recover in a trice'.⁸⁷

In another poem Sappho used of love a simile that Isaiah had used of fear:

Love shook
my heart like the wind on the mountain falling upon the oaks.

And it was reported to the house of David that Syria had settled down upon Ephraim. And his heart and his people's heart shook like the shaking of the trees of the forest before the wind.⁸⁸

From people who wear no garlands, says Sappho, the Charites turn away (ἀπυστρέφονται); that is, they decline to look upon them, with the favour and benefit that that implies. In Semitic religious language, too, a god who withdraws his or her favour is said to turn away:

My god's face is turned towards another place ...
How long, my Lady, will you be angry and your face averted?

For Yahweh your god is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you if you return to him.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Sappho 31. 17–(20). cf. *Maia* 22, 1970, 312 f.; *Ludlul* II 39–42, *Theodicy* 241 f. Cf. p. 514 on Thgn. 159 f., and Eccles. 11. 21, 'Do not be impressed at the actions of the sinner, but trust the Lord and persevere, for the Lord regards it as an easy thing suddenly to make a poor man rich.'

⁸⁸ Sappho 47; Isa. 7. 2.

⁸⁹ Sappho 81. 7 (= 81(b). 4 L.-P.); Great Prayer to Ishtar (Ebeling [1953], 130–6; *ANET* 383–5; Seux, 186–94; Foster, 508–14), lines 77, 93; 2 Chr. 30. 9.

In her most extended simile Sappho speaks of a departed friend as shining among the women of Lydia like the moon among the stars, shedding light on sea and land, while the fair dew falls upon the flowers and makes them flourish. I assume that the falling of the light and the dew on the fields is not added merely by way of ornament, but that we are meant to understand that the lovely woman likewise bestows a life-giving radiance and refreshment upon those around her. A distant comparison may be made with a passage in the hymn of Bulluṣa-rabi to Chuln, the goddess of healing, where she says of herself

When I go in procession, sexuality (*kuzbu*) falls as the dew;
when I enter, there is splendour.

'Falls as the dew' renders a single verb (*inalluṣ*) and is a metaphor, not a simile.⁹⁰

Several elements in the fragments of Sappho's wedding songs can be illustrated from oriental texts. In one she apostrophizes Hesperos, the Evening Star, as one who brings back the sheep and the goat that the dawn sent abroad. In a Sumerian hymn to Inanna we find the goddess in one section identified with the Evening Star. When she comes forth in the sky,

the ox in its yoke is turning the head (homewards),
sheep and goats(?) (shuffling back)
make the dust settle (thick) in their folds.
The numerous (wild) goats and asses of Shakan,
the animals of the desert,
the far-flung four-footed beasts ...
Milady is making wend their way to their lairs.⁹¹

Again, Sappho likens the bride to an apple that is left on the very topmost bough of the tree after the fruit-pickers have taken all that they can reach. As in a previous instance, Isaiah uses a similar comparison in a different application. It is a prophecy of the destruction of Damascus, which will be like the reaping of a field of corn:

But gleanings will be left in it,
as (at) the beating of an olive tree:
two or three olives at the top of the bough,
four or five on the twigs of the tree.⁹²

In another fragment Sappho has a comparison for the bridegroom:

⁹⁰ Sappho 96. 6–14; W. G. Lambert, *Or. N.S.* 36, 1967, 126 (Foster, 498).

⁹¹ Sappho 104(a); Jacobsen, 118.

⁹² Sappho 105(a); Isa. 17. 6.

To what, dear groom, can I well liken you?
To a slender sapling I most liken you.

The point of interest here is the formal structure, which has its closest parallel in Ezekiel, addressing the Egyptian king Apries in May 587.

To whom are you like in your greatness?
Lo, I behold (you as) a cedar of Lebanon.

The rhetorical question 'to what can I compare you?' also occurs in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. But the pattern of question followed by the similarly structured answer may derive from an older tradition of antiphonal acclamations, exemplified by the triumph which Gilgamesh celebrates with Enkidu after killing the Bull of Heaven. They ride together down Uruk High Street before an admiring crowd, and Gilgamesh asks his retainers,

'Who is good of the young men? Who is splendid of the males?'
'Gilgamesh is good of the young men! Gilgamesh is splendid of the males!'⁹³

Those lines of Sappho are not antiphonal, but two other fragments are. We noted in the first chapter (p. 44) that antiphony appears in certain early Greek ritual settings which have pre-Hellenic or Asiatic connections, and that it was well established in the Near East from early times. One of the Sappho fragments was mentioned in that context. It clearly belongs to a ritual enactment of the death of Adonis. A chorus of girls asks Aphrodite (or rather, a priestess representing her) what they can do, and she tells them to beat their breasts and rend their tunics. This and the other Sapphic fragments that mention Adonis constitute our earliest evidence for the Greek cult of this West Semitic divinity.⁹⁴

The other antiphonal fragment has no cultic aspect but is purely artistic or, if the term may be applied to a composition presumably intended initially for sung performance, literary. It comes from a dialogue between a man and a woman. He has something to say to her but is hampered by inhibitions; she responds that it cannot be anything honourable. Later readers imagined the piece to be an exchange between Alcaeus and Sappho, but there can hardly have been any documentary or other reliable basis for this. It was simply a dialogue poem with alternate stanzas (whether just the two, or more) in the male and female persons, like the ninth Ode of Horace's third book. The genre goes back to the so-

called divine love lyrics of Sumer, which include erotic dialogue songs between Inanna and Dumuzi. Akkadian poets adapted it to the sphere of human love in the Old Babylonian period, as we learn from a poem of which about a hundred lines are preserved. It is a dialogue between a disaffected man, who has taken up with a new mistress, and a woman who still loves him and is determined to win him back; in the end she succeeds. Horace's much shorter poem is similar enough in theme to suggest that he may have had an Archaic Greek model, which in turn stood in a line of tradition leading back to Mesopotamia. Among the love songs and excerpts which make up the Song of Solomon, too, we find fragments of he-she dialogues. The form is also found in Egyptian love poetry of the New Kingdom.⁹⁵

Finally, let it be recalled that it is in Sappho that we first hear of the child-snatching demon Gello, who has been connected with the Mesopotamian *gallâ*.⁹⁶

Alcaeus

In contrast to the impressive quantity of Near Eastern elements which we have been able to find in Sappho, her fellow-citizen and contemporary Alcaeus affords little material for comment. I have no explanation to offer for the disparity.

One point of interest is his recurrent use of the image of a ship in a storm as an allegory of political danger or disaster. He may have been anticipated in this by Archilochus. It is, no doubt, a natural field of experience for Greeks, especially island-dwellers, to draw upon. It is worth noting, however, that the Hebrew prophets made occasional use of it too. The most extended example is in Ezekiel, who represents Tyre (another island city) as a beautifully built and fitted-out ship which has now come to grief.

Into the great waters the rowers have brought you,
the east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas.
Your riches and your wares, your merchandise,
your seamen and your sailors,
your repairers and your dealers, and all the fighting men in you,
and your whole assembly within you,
sink in the heart of the seas on the day of your collapse.

A short specimen in Isaiah,

⁹⁵ Sappho 137; M. Held, *JCS* 15, 1961, 1-26 and 16, 1962, 37-9 (K. Hecker, *TUAT* ii. 743-7; Foster, 92-5); Cant. 1. 7 f., 2. 2 f., 6. 1 f.; Lichtheim, ii. 182-5.

⁹⁶ Sappho 168A (= 178 L.-P.); above, p. 58.

⁹³ Sappho 115; Ezek. 31. 2 f., Lam. 2. 13; *Gilg.* VI 182 f.

⁹⁴ Sappho 140. Cf. above, p. 57; J. P. Brown, *JSS* 10, 1965, 218 f. For the rending of garments cf. p. 340 n. 12.

Your ropes are slack, they will not hold the mast firm in place,
they will not spread the sail,

provides a more specific parallel for Alcaeus' *χόλαισι δ' ἄγκονναι*, 'the stays are slack'.⁹⁷

In one of his many drinking songs Alcaeus says 'let one cup follow hard on another'. One might compare the expression *krpn 'l krpn*, '(wine-)jar upon jar', which occurs in a fragmentary description of a banquet in one of the Ugaritic epics. However, it can hardly be claimed that this constitutes evidence for a traditional formula, or that Alcaeus' expression need be anything but spontaneous.⁹⁸

Stesichorus and Ibycus

In a charming fragment of his *Geryoneis* Stesichorus relates how the Sun-god, on parting from Heracles, entered his golden cup to cross Oceanus 'to the depths of holy Night, to his mother and wedded wife and dear children'. The idea that he has a family back there which he visits at night might be thought a piece of Stesichorean whimsy. In fact we find it—at least the mother and the wife—at a much earlier date in Sumerian poetry. In *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* Enkidu wakes Gilgamesh up from a sleep which has overcome him, saying

'You who have gone to sleep, you who have gone to sleep,
Gilgamesh son of Kulaba, how long are you going to sleep?
The mountains are veiled, shadow has covered them;
the evening twilight has [fallen] over them;
Utu (the Sun) has gone with head raised to the bosom of his
mother Ningal.'

In a great hymn to Utu it is his wife that he goes to:

Utu, your heart may turn good (again), your liver may turn
favourable,
your bright countenance, your rightful judgment
to the place of Šerida, your beloved(?) spouse.
Šerida, your beloved(?) spouse
with sweet words may she welcome you ...
To the couch, your (good) piece of furniture, may she(?)
invite you.

⁹⁷ Alc. 6, 73, 208 (= 326 L.-P.), 306(i), cf. Archil. 105–6, Thgn. 671–82; Ezek. 27. 3–9, 25–36 (the verses quoted above are 26 f.); Isa. 33. 23 = Alc. 208. 9.

⁹⁸ Alc. 346. 5; KTU 1. 17 v. 6.

In a little bilingual prayer to be addressed to the Sun-god at sunset, he is pictured entering his dwelling E-babbar, 'House of Brightness', and being welcomed by his wife Aya with his supper.⁹⁹

In the longest fragment of Ibycus we see the poet ending his song with praise of Polycrates, the tyrant or future tyrant of Samos. After mentioning the handsomest of the heroes who fought at Troy, he continues:

Their beauty is for ever,
and you too shall have fame undying, Polycrates,
so far as depends on song and my own fame.

The motif that the poet can confer undying fame on a handsome prince because his song will endure in literary tradition was familiar in the Near East at an earlier period. In the Hebrew royal weddinghymn which may well be for Ahab of Israel (874–853), the king is told

You are the comeliest of the sons of man;
charm is poured on your lips ...
I will make your name remembered in every generation;
therefore the peoples will praise you for ever and aye.¹⁰⁰

Ibycus is also the first known Greek source for the myth of how mankind lost the chance of perpetual youth. This was discussed in chapter 3 (p. 118).

Anacreon and the 'Carmina convivalia'

In a little prayer to Artemis, Anacreon uses the verb *ποιμαίνειν*, 'shepherd', of her power over the people of Magnesia on the Maeander. In chapter 5 (p. 227) we considered the 'shepherd' metaphor as applied to kings in the Near East and in the Homeric formula *ποιμένα λαών*. Here we have it applied to a deity, and this too is very common in Babylonian and Hebrew poetry, whether for male or female divinities. It also appears in the Hittite treaty between Muwatalli and Alaksandu of Wilusa, where one of the gods invoked is 'the Sun-god of heaven, king of the lands, shepherd of mankind'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Stes. 185 = S17 (PMGF p. 160); *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* (A) 75–9 (D. O. Edzard, ZA 80, 1990, 186); G. R. Castellino, *Oriens Antiquus* 8, 1969, 22–7, obv. 181–7 (= rev. 108–15); S. Langdon, *OECT* 6. 11 f. (Falkenstein–von Soden, 221, Seux, 216; Foster, 675); cf. W. Heimpel, *JCS* 38, 1986, 128 f.

¹⁰⁰ Ibyc. 282 = S151. 46–8 (PMGF p. 243); Ps. 45. 3(2), 18(17).

¹⁰¹ Anacr. 348. 8; *En. el.* VII 72, Shamash Hymn 25, *Theodicy* 297, Great Prayer to Ishtar (Ebeling [1953], 130–6; *ANET* 383–5; Seux, 186–94; Foster, 508–14), line 27; E. Ebeling, *ZDMG* 69, 1915, 96 no. 26 obv. 17 (Seux, 450; Foster, 607); *Erra* I 3; Tallqvist (1938), 164 f.; Ps. 23. 1, 28. 9, 80. 2(1), 95. 7, 100. 3, Isa. 40. 11; J. Friedrich, *MVAG* 34.1, 1930, 78 § 20. 1.

In chapter 3 (p. 154) we noted that Anacreon's remark that whoever goes down to Hades is not likely to come up again is closely matched in its formulation in the Book of Job.

The collection of 'carmina convivalia' preserved by Athenaeus goes back to the fifth century, and at least some of the items in it date from Anacreon's lifetime. Two are examples of the motif whereby the poet wishes he were a certain article that would bring him into close contact with the object of his desire:

I wish I were a lovely pendant, big, fine gold,
and a lovely lady would wear me with purity in her heart.

I have not found any parallel in the West Asiatic literatures, but there is a good one in an Egyptian collection dating from the New Kingdom:

Would that I were her seal-ring,
that [sits] upon [her finger.
Then she would look after me]
as something that gives her joy.¹⁰²

The structure is so similar to the Greek examples—first the wish, then the explanation of the advantage its fulfilment would bring in terms of what the woman would do with the ornament—that it goes against the grain to suppose that the form was invented anew by the Greeks. If it was Egyptian in origin, it may well have become familiar in Phoenicia under Egyptian influence.

Simonides

Earlier in this chapter (p. 514) I had occasion to refer to Simonides' criticism of the epitaph for Midas which claimed that its inscribed message would last till the end of the world. 'All things yield to the gods: as for a stone, even man's arts can shatter it.' I cited this as a typically Classical Greek response to an oriental extravagance. But it could be said that Simonides, while adopting the attitude that we might expect from a Greek of his time, is using another piece of oriental wisdom to express it. In a Babylonian text, after some fragmentary line-ends which offer 'is dust ... is finished ... returns to clay ... fire burns (it) ... [does not] emerge to posterity', we read

[Whatever] the people create does not survive for ever;
[ma]nkind and its creations alike come to an end.
[But do you offer prayers to the god.¹⁰³

¹⁰² PMG 901, cf. 900; S. Schott, *Altägyptische Liebestlieder*, Zurich 1950, 67.

¹⁰³ Simon. 581; BWL 108.4–11.

Possibly Simonides went on to contrast the perishability of the physical memorial with the *monumentum aere perennius*, the enduring fame which poetry can confer. He expresses an analogous sentiment in his verses about men such as Leonidas who die for their country:

Their tomb is an altar; in the place of wailing
there is remembrance, and their dirge is praise.
This winding-sheet is such
as neither mould nor Time that conquers all can fade.

The antithesis between the conventional material provision for the dead and the more lasting verbal media of remembrance was already formulated in Egypt by about 1300 BC:

(Ancient scribes) did not make for themselves tombs of copper,
with stelae of metal from heaven ...
Their tombstones are covered with soil,
their graves are forgotten.
Their names are pronounced over their books,
which they made while they had being;
good is the memory of their makers,
it is for ever and all time!
Be a scribe, take it to heart,
that your name become as theirs.
Better is a book than a graven stela,
than a solid tomb-enclosure ...
Better is a book than a well-built house,
than tomb-chapels in the west;
better than a solid mansion,
than a stela in the temple!¹⁰⁴

An elegiac fragment of Simonides may as well be mentioned here. He praises the performance of the Corinthian contingent at the Battle of Plataea, and says that they

had the finest witness to their work,
of precious gold, in heaven.

In another place he spoke similarly of 'the gold shining in heaven' as 'the best of witnesses'. Commendation of 'the witness in the sky' also appears in one of the Hebrew Psalms from the time of the monarchy.

¹⁰⁴ Simon. 531.3–5, cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 6.5–14; P. Chester Beatty IV ii–iii (Lichtheim, ii. 176 f.)

The poet declares that the seed of David shall live for ever, and his throne be established in perpetuity like the sun;

like the moon it shall be established for ever:
the witness in the sky is reliable.¹⁰⁵

Pindar and Bacchylides

If ever the gods favoured a mortal man, it was Tantalus; ἀλλὰ γὰρ καταπέψαι μέγαν ὄλβον οὐκ ἐδυνάσθη, 'but he could not digest his great felicity', and surfeit proved his undoing. The verb πέσσειν or καταπέσσειν, 'digest', is used metaphorically elsewhere in Greek poetry in the sense of feeding something into oneself and absorbing it; often the idea is of mulling something over in the process of coming to terms with it. In the present passage the meaning seems to be that Tantalus' fortune was too much for him: he could not hold it down. Parallel imagery may be cited from the Book of Job, where it is said of the bad man that

Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth,
and he hides it under his tongue
and saves it and does not let it go
and retains it within his palate,
his food turns over in his stomach;
snakes' venom is inside him.
After gulping down wealth, he vomits it up:
El evicts it from his belly.¹⁰⁶

In an ode written for Theron of Acragas in 476 we meet for the first time in Greek a clear reference to a judgment of the dead:

When men die, the wicked consciousnesses amongst them
straightway pay the penalty,
for their sins in this realm of Zeus
are judged by one below the earth
who declares the reckoning with unsympathetic inevitability.

Pindar may be echoing the doctrines of an Orphic theogony composed in Ionia around 500 BC. A fragment attributable to that poem refers to the different fates of the good and the wicked (as do some fragments of Pindar), but reveals nothing about the judgment process. Some years after the ode for Theron, Aeschylus—who had by then been to Sicily and probably made Pindar's acquaintance—is found stating the doctrine of

¹⁰⁵ Simon. eleg. 16, cf. 87; Ps. 89. 38(37).

¹⁰⁶ Pind. Ol. 1. 55; Job 20. 12–15.

post-mortem judgment and making the lord of the underworld himself responsible for it. Not even in Hades will the sinner escape arraignment:

Even there one's misdeeds are judged, it is said,
by another Zeus among the dead in final judgment.

The 'other Zeus' is Zeus Chthonios or Hades, whom Aeschylus elsewhere describes as a great corrector of men below the earth, who watches over everything with tablet-writing mind.¹⁰⁷

In his edition of Aeschylus Wilamowitz noted correctly 'iudicium Inferorum potius e religione Aegyptiaca quam Graeca'. Judgment of the dead before Osiris had long been a prominent feature of Egyptian eschatology. It presupposes the existence of a blessed afterlife for the deserving, which is contrary to the general Greek and Semitic view of the underworld as a cheerless place where all are reduced to the same state. In Jewish writing the idea of a posthumous judgment does not emerge until the second century BC, and then it takes the special form of a judgment day sometime in the future when everyone's fates will be determined.

In Mesopotamia the evidence is scant and late. In *The Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince* the prince dreams that he is brought before Nergal, the king of the underworld, who shouts at him in fury and is about to kill him. But Ishum intercedes and persuades Nergal to spare him. Nergal, with threats and warnings, allows him to be released back into the upper world. The situation is not the same as that of a man who has died and is being assigned his posthumous fate, but the passage may suggest a belief in Nergal's role as judge of the dead. Two funerary texts from Susa, dated to the seventh or sixth century, refer to the dead man's journey to the other world, and there he is apparently brought before the Anunnaki for some sort of sentence to be pronounced. But it is not clear that they will be passing judgment on his misdeeds during life. In all these texts it may simply be a matter of passing sentence of death and confirming irrevocably the status of the deceased.¹⁰⁸ There is also a prayer to Gilgamesh in his capacity as a power in the underworld. In the opening lines he is addressed as follows:

¹⁰⁷ Pind. Ol. 2. 57–60, cf. fr. 129–30, 133; Orph. fr. 222; Aesch. Supp. 230 f., Eum. 273–5. Cf. West (1983), 75, 98 f., 110. The Homeric allusion to Minos 'giving judgments to the dead' (Od. 11. 569–71) clearly refers to adjudication in their disputes, not to passing verdicts on their lives and dividing the good from the wicked for eternal reward or punishment.

¹⁰⁸ CPLM no. 32 rev. 11 ff.; Ebeling (1931), 20–2; J. Yoyotte and others in *Le jugement des morts* (Sources orientales, 4), Paris 1961, 15–142; S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgment of the Dead*, London 1967, 6–75.

Gilgamesh, perfect king, judge of the Anunnaki,
 wise prince ... lord of those below;
 you are a judge, and you inspect like a god;
 you stand in the earth, you give the final jud[gment].
 Your judgment is not altered, nor neglected [your w]ord.
 You interrogate, you examine, you judge, you inspect and you rectify.
 Shamash entrusted verdicts and decisions to your hand.
 Kings, governors, and princes bow down before you;
 you inspect their omens, you make the decisions about them.¹⁰⁹

But in what follows, the speaker of the prayer says that affliction has come upon him, and he asks Gilgamesh to pronounce a judgment for him to deliver him from it; so it does not appear that his judgments are of an eschatological character.

Pindar continues with an account of the happy afterlife enjoyed by the good, and then of the yet happier one granted to those who have succeeded in passing three blameless lives. They go to the Isles of the Blest, where Kronos presides over the select company. The description of this paradise contains one unusual detail. There, he says, ἀνθεμα χρυσοῦ φλέγει, flowers of gold flare, some of them growing on trees or shrubs, others in the water. The scholiast bids us understand a comparative participle: 'flowers as of gold'. But it is doubtful whether the words can mean anything other than flowers whose substance is gold. This feature of the paradise at the end of the world has its nearest analogue in the Gilgamesh epic. When Gilgamesh passes through Mt. Mashu and approaches the end of the dark tunnel,

[When he had achieved eleven leagues, he came out before the sun;
 [when he had achieved twelve leagues,] radiance prevailed.
 All [.....] thorn-bushes of (precious) stone ...
 Carnelian was bearing its fruit . .
 Lapis lazuli was bearing foliage,
 fruit it was bearing, wonderful to behold.

The description of this jewelled garden seems to have been remarkably extensive, for after a gap of some 24 lines the fragmentary verses are still full of references to precious stones in association with trees and bushes.¹¹⁰

In the Sixth Olympian Pindar relates the myth of the birth of the seer Iamos. Euadne, impregnated by Apollo, bore him in the bushes beside

¹⁰⁹ W. G. Lambert in Garelli, 40 (Senx, 428).

¹¹⁰ Pind. *Ol.* 2. 72; *Gilg.* IX v-vi. Philostr. *VA* 5. 5. 1 mentions tales of a Poplar of the Sun in the far west which distils gold. See also pp. 422 f. on *Od.* 5. 70 f.

the river Alpheus and abandoned him there, hidden amid the reeds and undergrowth. By the gods' will snakes nurtured him on honey. When he reached maturity, he waded into the river and from there called upon Apollo and his maternal grandfather Poseidon to assist his integration into society. We recognize a version of the Exposed Child motif discussed near the beginning of the previous chapter. What is noteworthy about this instance is the riverside setting and the reference to Iamos' being hidden among reeds. This recalls the birth stories of the princes of Kanesh, Sargon, Moses, and Romulus and Remus, who were consigned to rivers in reed baskets or (in Moses' case) abandoned among the riverside reeds.¹¹¹

In another poem Pindar refers to wine by means of the phrase ἀμπέλου ὀρόσος, 'the dew of the grape-cluster'. I know of no other instance in Greek of 'dew' being used of wine, though it is occasionally found in other poets, from Aeschylus on, of other dripping liquids. In an Ugaritic fragment, however, where a number of alcoholic refreshments offered to the Healers are listed, one of the items is *tl mrt*, 'dew of must'.¹¹²

On Bellerophon's dream in the Thirteenth Olympian, in which Athena gave him a golden bridle, see pp. 287 f. After attaching it to Pegasus and mounting him, he became a formidable airborne warrior. He overcame the Amazon archers by picking them off αἰθέρος ψυχρῶν ἀπὸ κόλπων ἐρήμου, 'from the empty air's cool bosom'. Here again we have an unusual metaphor that is paralleled in a Semitic poetic tradition. In an Old Babylonian prayer to the Gods of the Night it is said that the people have fallen silent with the coming of darkness, doors are bolted, and the gods Shamash, Sin, Adad, and Ishtar have gone in *ana utul šamê*, 'to the bosom of heaven'.¹¹³

In the magnificent First Pythian Pindar describes a scene in heaven that corresponds to the peaceful festivity prevailing at Hieron's court. Apollo plays his lyre to accompany the Muses' singing, as Pindar plays his for his chorus. Zeus' fiery thunderbolt flickers out, and his great eagle has been lulled to sleep. 'Even the violent Ares has left his cruel-bladed spears apart and warms his heart in drowsiness.' This picture of the somnolent war-god recalls the opening scene of *Erra and Ishum*, where Erra's response to the call to war is decidedly sluggish.

¹¹¹ Pind. *Ol.* 6. 28-70; above, pp. 439 f.

¹¹² Pind. *Ol.* 7. 2; *KTU* 1. 22 i 20 (Caquot-Szzymer, 476).

¹¹³ Pind. *Ol.* 13. 88; G. Dossin, *RA* 32, 1935, 180 (Foster, 146); cf. W. Heimpel, *JCS* 38, 1986, 130.

As for Erra, his arms were weary like those of an insomniac.
He was saying to his heart 'I think I'll get up—I think I'll go back to sleep'.
He said to his weapons, 'Stow yourselves in the corners',
(and) to the Seven, unrivalled warrior, 'Go back home'.
Until you (Ishum) woke him, he was asleep in his bed;
with Mami his wife he was making joy.¹¹⁴

In line 7 Pindar calls the eagle ἀρχὸς οἰωνῶν, 'the ruler of birds'; elsewhere both he and Aeschylus refer to the eagle as 'the king of birds'. This designation is anticipated in an inscription of Sennacherib, where the eagle is called *ašarēd iššūrē*, 'leader of birds'. The word *ašarēdu* means 'the first in status', and is usually applied to gods, kings, or warriors.¹¹⁵

Later in the poem Pindar offers Hieron advice on governing his subjects. One of his admonitions is νόμα δικάϊωι πηδαλίωι στρατόν, 'guide the people with a just steering-oar'. The 'steering-oar' could be taken as purely abstract, or as a metaphor for the concrete symbol of the sceptre; in another place Pindar describes Hieron as ruling Ortygia καθαρῶι σκάπτωι, 'with a clean sceptre', and Philostratus later speaks of Minos operating in his capacity as judge in the underworld δικαιοσύνης σκήπτρῳ, 'with the sceptre of justice'. The transfer of the predicate 'just' from the king to his sceptre corresponds to a recurrent formula in Akkadian, where the king is said to have a *haṭṭi išarti* or *haṭṭi mēšarim*, a sceptre of right or of justice. Similarly a Hebrew king, perhaps Ahab, is told by the poet who celebrates his wedding that 'your sceptre of kingship is a sceptre of justice'.¹¹⁶

Appealing to the king of Cyrene for clemency for his exiled friend Damophilus, Pindar argues that 'Zeus the imperishable released the Titans'. This is a mythological innovation with respect to Hesiod and Homer, who treat the Titans as being in permanent imprisonment in Tartarus. Those who felt the need to reconcile this with the concept of Kronos as ruler in the Isles of the Blest had to postulate his release, but his special position makes him a special case and does not imply a general amnesty. However, just as the confinement of the Former Gods in the underworld by the chief god reflects oriental theology (above, pp. 297–9), so their subsequent release is anticipated there. One of the fifty names of Marduk catalogued in *Enūma eliš* is Agaku,

¹¹⁴ Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 10–12; *Erra* I 15–20.

¹¹⁵ Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 7, *Ol.* 13. 21, Aesch. *Ag.* 114; Luckenbill, 36. 77.

¹¹⁶ Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 86, cf. *Ol.* 6. 93; Philostr. *Vi.* 3. 25. 2; *CAD* s.v. *haṭṭu* 1(d); Ps. 45. 7(6).

lord of the pure incantation, who restores the dead to life,
who had mercy upon the Bound Gods
(and) removed the yoke imposed on the gods his enemies.

As the Bound Gods were also the Dead Gods, their deliverance was an appropriate act for the god who restores to life.¹¹⁷

Meditating on the futility of human ambitions, Pindar sums it up in the tersest manner imaginable:

ἐπάμεροι. τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ
ἄνθρωπος.

They live for the day. What is one? What is one not?
The dream of a shadow is man.

The rhetorical questions are strongly reminiscent of two biblical passages:

O Yahweh, what is (a) man, that thou dost notice him? . . .
Man is like emptiness; his days are as a shadow that passes by.

What is (a) man, that thou dost raise him up? . . .
For our days on earth are a shadow.

For the image of the shadow we may also compare the Akkadian proverb quoted in a letter to an Assyrian king, perhaps Esarhaddon: 'Man is the shadow of God, and a slave is the shadow of a man'.¹¹⁸ Pindar compounds the idea of insubstantiality by combining 'shadow' with 'dream', a symbol which we have already discussed in connection with Minnervmus (p. 507).

In an erotic encomium Pindar declares that when he casts his eyes upon lads' bodies, he melts like bees' wax in the sun. The image is paralleled in a non-erotic context in one of the Psalms:

My heart is like wax, it is melted within my insides.¹¹⁹

One of the most famous fragments of Pindar is one in which he describes the pleasant conditions enjoyed by the virtuous dead in the place appointed for them. It begins with the statement that 'for them the strength of the sun shines down there while it is night here'. This contrasts with the common conception according to which the dead leave the light of the sun (see above, pp. 159 f.). However, we find evidence

¹¹⁷ Pind. *Pyth.* 4. 291, cf. B. K. Braswell, *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar*, Berlin & New York 1988, 390; *En. el.* VII 27 f.

¹¹⁸ Pind. *Pyth.* 8. 95; Ps. 144. 3 f., Job 7. 17–8. 9; *BWL* 282 (Foster, 349. 5).

¹¹⁹ Pind. *fr.* 123. 10–12; Ps. 22. 15(14).

for it, as well as for the other view, in Mesopotamia. In a Sumerian elegy preserved on a tablet of Old Babylonian date, the dead man is assured:

Utu, the great ... of Arallu (the underworld),
will, after he has turned the dark place into day, judge your judgment.

Shamash is hymned as 'illuminator of the darkness [...] both above and below', and as 'judge of those above, corrector of those below'.

You open the great-gate of the wide earth,
you kindle light, for the Anunnaki you accomplish judgment.

In a late bilingual text from Uruk he is addressed as

Shamash the splendid, radiance of those above,
sign that never rests, light of those below ...
monitor of the Dead Gods inside Arallu.

In the Ugaritic Baal epic, too, the Sun-goddess is said to concern herself with the spirits of the lower world. All these passages seem to presuppose the idea that the sun, after leaving the sky at sunset, passes through the underworld and performs the same functions of giving light and administering justice as in the upper world.¹²⁰

Praising gold, Pindar called it a son of Zeus, and observed that 'no moth (*sēs*) nor woodworm devours it'. Deutero-Isaiah had similarly, in predicating permanence, used the moth—and indeed the same word for moth—as a symbol of transience:

Do not fear the abuse of man,
and do not be shattered by their revilings,
for the tinea will devour them like a garment,
and the moth (*sās*) will destroy them like wool:
but my justice will be for ever,
and my salvation for generation upon generation.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Pind. fr. 129 1; S. N. Kramer, *Two Elegies on a Pushkin Museum Tablet. A New Sumerian Literary Genre*, Moscow 1960, 61–88 f. (as translated by W. Heimpel, *JCS* 38, 1986, 146); Shamash Hymn (BWL 126) 2, 4, cf. E. Ebeling, *ZA* 51, 1955, 170. 28 = 172, 30 (Seux, 454; Foster, 671); id., *MVAG* 23.1, 1918, 35–7 lines 21, 30 f. (Seux, 424 f.); A. Falkenstein, *XV. vorläufiger Bericht über die ... Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka*, 36. 5 f. (Seux, 232 f.); *KTU* 1. 6 vi 44–8. Cf. Heimpel, op. cit., 146–50; M. C. Astour in Alster, 232 f.; J. F. Healey, *ibid.* 239–42; also above, pp. 470 f., on the Egyptian doctrines of Re's passage through the Dual.

¹²¹ Pind. fr. 222; Isa. 51. 7 f., compared by Brown, 73 f. I have used 'tinea' for the first Hebrew word, which is 'ש', simply to avoid having to say 'moth' for both. The 'ש' is a recurrent symbol of corruption, cf. Hos. 5. 12, Isa. 50. 9, Ps. 39. 12(11), Job 4. 19, 13. 28; *sās* occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament.

Finally, a passage of Bacchylides calls for mention. In a description of the prosperous festivity that prevails in conditions of peace, he writes:

On the iron-bound shield-grips the webs
of tawny spiders appear,
while pointed spears and two-edged swords
are overcome by rust.

Some very similar lines appear in *Erra and Ishum*. The ferocious Seven who march with Erra, the god of war and destruction, are urging him to rouse up and act. They complain of the state of affairs that has arisen as a result of his inactivity:

'Over our battle gear spiders' webs are woven . . .
The points of our sharp arrows are bent;
our swords, from lack of slaughter, have developed verdigris.'¹²²

It will be recalled that in the same section of this poem we found anticipated a motif that we know from Pindar, that of the drowsy war-god. It would make no sense to suggest that Pindar and Bacchylides knew *Erra*. Of course they had no direct knowledge of any foreign literature. What may be significant is that their repertory of imagery for peace (if it is legitimate to speak of these two poets as possessing a shared repertory) contains two motifs which had also been in the repertory of Kabti-ilani-Marduk, three or four centuries earlier.

¹²² Bacchyl. fr. 4. 69–72 (cf. Soph. fr. 286 with Radt, *Eur. Erechtheus* 60. 1 Austin); *Erra* 188–91. For cobwebs generally as a sign of neglect cf. Pearson on Soph. 1 c.; West (1978), 279, Kassel–Austin on Cratinus fr. 202.

11

Aeschylus

Aeschylus? *Aeschylus*? Was this not the man who fought at Marathon and Salamis against the forces of the East? The poet who first articulated the antithesis of Hellene and barbarian, and posited the all-round inferiority of the latter to the former? Pioneer of the most quintessentially and autonomously Greek of literary forms, Attic tragedy? Is even he now to be found prey to these insidious oriental influences that seem to reach everywhere?

The fact is that his plays do yield a further body of evidence for the penetration of West Asiatic motifs into Greece, as the plays of Sophocles and Euripides do not. It is not a question of Aeschylus' personal access to eastern sources or receptivity to eastern ideas. It is just that he happens to be the author from the first half of the fifth century whose work is most extensively preserved; indeed, we have more of it than we have of any earlier Greek writer apart from the poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. If we had a comparable amount of any other poet of his time, we should probably find as much material there. Some of the items to be discussed are not specific to him but enjoy a wider currency in fifth-century poetry; they are considered here simply because Aeschylus happens to provide the earliest attestation of them.

As in the case of the lyric poets, what appears as 'new' oriental matter was not necessarily the newest of imports; I would remind the reader of the point made earlier, that things may be older than their earliest attestation. Our knowledge of sixth-century poetry is very fragmentary, and many ideas and motifs that are first documented in Aeschylus may in fact have been current in Greece for two or three generations before him. But it does seem that there was still some continuing influence in the first half of the fifth century. The strongest sign of this is the appearance in Aeschylus' later plays, the *Suppliants* and the *Oresteia*, of predicates and attributes of Zeus which do not appear earlier and which derive from Near Eastern theology.

The development of Aeschylus' Zeus is one topic that can be treated under a thematic heading. Most of the material to be considered, however, is too miscellaneous to be handled in his way, and on the whole the simplest procedure will be to go through the surviving plays in chronological order, from the *Persai* (472) to the *Oresteia* (458). I shall also find material of interest in the spurious *Prometheus Vinculus*.

The earliest of Aeschylus' surviving plays happens to be one in which the scene is set in an eastern country, all the characters are orientals, and the difference between oriental and Greek institutions is a major focus of interest. Persia itself lies beyond the purview of this work, but Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Levant were all by now parts of the Persian empire, and Xerxes' army drew contingents from them all. For Aeschylus they all came under the collective description 'barbarian', and his notions of their cultures will have been somewhat generalized. He does not in fact exhibit any very deep knowledge of them; for instance, he has his chorus addressing Zeus, Hermes, and Aidoneus, and apart (perhaps from a reference to the army bowing down to Earth and Heaven (199)), he makes little attempt to evoke a Persian religion different from the Greek. But he does introduce elements of the exotic:¹ eastern dress, allusions to fine fabrics and general luxury, strings of Persian or Persian-sounding personal names, prostration before royalty, and mentions of the king's divinity. He makes use, perhaps pointedly, of metaphors in relation to kingship which we have seen to be genuinely oriental: the king as shepherd (75, 241), the yoke of his rule (191, 594; see p. 520). His Persian elders utter unusual cries of woe such as *oi* (*oioi*, *oioioi*) and *oā*; we have noted their similarity to actual interjections attested in the Near East, and the more precise analogy of the syntagm '*oā* for the Persian army!' with the Akkadian '*ū* 'a for my people!' and '*ū* 'a for Babylon!' in the *Erra* epic (p. 263).

Lord of the leap

At more than one point in the play we encounter surprising metaphorical uses of the noun *ἀναξ* 'lord, king', or of the verb derived from it, *ἀνάσσω* 'rule'. A rower is *κώπης ἀναξ*, 'a lord of the oar', navy captains are *ναῶν ἀνακτες*, 'lords of ships', and cavalry commanders are *ἵππιδνακτες*, 'horse-lords' (378, 383, 996). More extraordinary is the expression in 96, *τίς ὁ κραιπνῶι ποδὶ πηδήματος εὐπετέος ἀνάσσων*, 'Who is the man who with nimble foot is lord of the happy-landing leap?'

This is not something peculiar to the *Persai*. Eteocles is lamented in the *Septem* (998) as *δυστόνων κακῶν ἀναξ*, 'lord of (= afflicted by) grievous ills'. In a lost play of Sophocles a doorkeeper was addressed as 'lord of the portal'. Euripides, in addition to a couple of echoes of

¹ W. Kranz, *Stasimon. Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der griechischen Tragödie*, Berlin 1933, 83-98; Hall, 76-100.

Aeschylus' 'lord of the oar', has several further examples. The Bistonian Diomedes is 'lord of the gold Thracian shield', and warriors are 'lords of bronze weapons'. The Spartans are 'lords of lies', and in a lost play someone was called 'mistress (= authoress) of this design and deed'.² This tragic idiom was parodied by the comedians and singled out for criticism by Aristotle on the ground that ἀνάσσειν was inappropriately grand for the control of an oar.³ In Pindar and especially in Bacchylides we find such novel compound epithets and titles as ἀναξιβρέντας, ἀνάξιππος, ἀναξιφόρμιγξ, ἀναξιχορος, ἀναξιμολπος, ὑμνοάνασσα lord/mistress of thunder, of horses, of the lyre, of dances, of song.

This free usage of ἀναξ and ἀνάσσω in elevated poetry of the fifth century seems to be a reflex of Semitic idiom. Akkadian *bēlu* 'lord, ruler, owner' and the cognate Hebrew *ba'al* are used in a wide range of phrases in which they do not denote lordship or exalted status but merely ownership, authorship, responsibility, or the embodiment of some quality. Among these we can find various analogies for the Greek expressions quoted. With 'lords of ships', 'lords of weapons', 'lord of horses', 'lord of the shield' we may compare Akkadian *bēl eleppi* 'lord of the boat, ship's captain', *bēl kakkī* 'lord of weapons, heavy-armed soldier', *bēl narkabti* 'lord of the chariot, chariot-fighter'; Hebrew *ba'al ḥappārāšīm* 'lords of horsemen, cavalry',⁴ *ba'al ḥiṣṣīm* 'lords of arrows, archers'. With 'lord of the happy-landing leap' we may compare *bēl birkī* 'lord of knees, runner', *bēl emūqī* 'lord of strength, strong man'. Beside 'lords of lies' and 'mistress of this design' we may put *bēl lemullī* (or *šālti, dabābi*) 'lord of evil/strife/(evil) speech, enemy', *bēl hīṭi* 'lord of wrongdoing', *bēl ikki* 'lord of (bad) mood, ill-disposed person', *bēl šerri* 'lord of hostility, enemy', *ba'al rāšā'* 'lord of evil, wicked person', *ba'al me'zimmōt* 'lord of intrigues, schemer'. Even the comic poet's parodic ἀναξ ὑπήνης 'lord of the beard' has its counterpart in the Hebrew *ba'al šē'ār* 'lord of hair, hairy man' (2 Ki. 1. 8); no doubt he found the phrase in some tragedy.

The word χειρῶναξ, literally 'hand-lord', that is, handworker, craftsman, is a special case. With its derivatives it first appears in tragedy and Herodotus, and enjoys currency in Ionic and later prose. The Semitic languages seem to provide no close parallel, for in Akkadian *bēl qātī*

² Soph. fr. 775 πύλης ἀναξ θυρωρέ; Eur. Cycl. 86, fr. 705 = 111 Austin; Alc. 498 ζαχρύσου Θρηκίας πέλτης ἀναξ, I.A. 1260 χαλκίων ὀπλῶν ἀνακτες, Andr. 447 ψευδῶν ἀνακτες, Telephus fr. 699 = 105 Austin ἀνασσα πράγους τοῦτε καὶ βουλευματος.

³ Ar. Lys. 706 (= Eur. fr. 699); Pl. Com. 130 K.-A. ἀναξ ὑπήνης Ἐπίκρατες (who had a big beard); Arist. Rhet. 1405a29.

⁴ Perhaps better, with a slight change of pointing, *ba'al ḥappārāšīm* 'lords of horses'.

'lord of the hand' has a quite different meaning, namely 'guarantor'. In Hittite, however, there was a similar expression meaning 'craftsman'.⁵

The context in which the Persian elders ask 'Who is the man who with nimble foot is lord of the happy-landing leap?' concerns the difficulty for mortals of avoiding deception by God. They explain:

For Ate, friendly-fawning at first,
leads a man astray into the hunting-net,
from where no mortal can jump free and flee.

The image of enticing a victim into a net by flattery is paralleled in the Book of Proverbs:

A man who smooths on his fellow
is one who spreads out a net for his feet.⁶

The Queen's dream

Following the parodos the Queen appears and relates a troubling dream that she has had. She prefaces it by declaring that she has had many dreams since her son went off to invade Greece, but that 'I never yet saw such a clear dream as last night'. For this manner of introducing a dream and arousing the hearers' apprehension a parallel can be quoted from an Old Babylonian letter: 'Since the ruin of your father's house I never saw this dream', meaning the one just dreamed and about to be related.⁷

The Queen saw two tall, beautiful women, one clad in Persian dress, the other in Greek, and each living in the corresponding country. Though sisters, they were at loggerheads. Xerxes was trying to calm them and yoke them to his chariot. One was obedient, but the other writhed and struggled, breaking the yoke and tipping Xerxes to the ground.

The motif of the royal person worried by a dream, which turns out to be symbolic and prophetic, may recall the biblical episodes of Pharaoh's dream which Joseph interpreted and those of Nebuchadnezzar which Daniel interpreted. The particular symbolism of the Persian Queen's dream can also be illustrated from the Old Testament. The two sisters who stand for Persia and Greece may be compared with the two sisters in Ezekiel who symbolize Samaria and Jerusalem; nothing of the sort can be cited from earlier Greek literature. The yoking may be illustrated from Hosea:

⁵ Burkert (1992), 39 with 176 n. 28.

⁶ Pers. 97-101, cf. Ag. 1374-6; Prov. 29. 5.

⁷ Pers. 176-80; AEM i/1. 478 (cp. 237. 3-5).

And Ephraim is a trained heifer, my friend for the threshing,
and I have put a kindly yoke on her neck.
I will set her to, she will plough.

We have already encountered in the Theognidea (though not in such graphic form) the image of laying the yoke of servitude upon a people, and we referred there to the frequency of this metaphor in Mesopotamian and biblical texts.⁸

The elders do not venture to interpret the Queen's dream for her, but instead recommend her to supplicate the gods:

If it was something bad that you saw, ask for it to be turned away,
and for the good to be fulfilled for you and your children
and the community and all your friends.

She should also pour libations to Earth and the dead, with further prayers. (She had already, on rising, washed her hands and gone to the altar to make an offering to the Averting Deities.) They conclude their speech with a comforting affirmation: they judge that the matter will turn out well for her in every way.

All this is very much in line with Assyrian rituals and prayers employed in the event of a bad dream. One ritual prescribes that the person concerned should wash his hands with soda while still in bed, before setting foot on the floor. Another procedure calls for a libation of vinegar, again before leaving the bed. Prayers might be addressed to various gods, but Shamash was the most usual. They contained formulae such as

If (this dream) is good, may its goodness not pass me by;
if evil, may its evil not catch me.

May the wind carry off the evil of the dream I have had.

If it was good, may the good happen to me.

Like the lump of earth which I throw in the water before you, may
(the evil of the dream) be dissolved and dissipated.

Another strategy was simply to declare, before setting foot on the floor, that 'the dream I have had is good, good, verily good before Sin and Shamash!' This assertion constituted a good omen, a piece of magic to counter the evil. The optimistic assurance which the Persian elders give to their Queen finds its analogy here.⁹ It is not necessary to suppose that

⁸ Pers. 181-99; Gen. 41. 1 ff., Dan. 2. 3 ff., 4. 5 ff.; Ezek. 23. 2 ff.; Hos. 10. 11; above, p. 520.

⁹ Pers. 215-25; Oppenheim (1956), 298-307, cf. Seux, 369-73; Foster, 638, 674. The lump of earth was one that the dreamer had rubbed all over himself to absorb all pollution.

Aeschylus had special knowledge of Assyrian practices. It may be that wandering seers had brought them to Greece, and that some superstitious persons, when they had a troubling dream, employed verbal or practical *apotropaic* measures similar to those cited.

Later, after the Queen has learned from the Messenger's report that her dream had indeed portended evil, she refers to it in the phrase *νυκτὸς ὄψεως ἐνυπνίων*, 'the night-vision of dreams'. The author of the *Prometheus* uses the expression *ὄψεις ἐνυπνοί*, 'nocturnal visions'. It corresponds to the Akkadian *tabrūt mūši*, 'vision of the night'. According to Oppenheim, this

occurs only in literary and late texts mostly written with the Sumerogram MAŠ.GE₆ ... typically used as a poetic synonym for 'dream'. ... The connection with divinatory practices is clearly indicated by the term MAŠ ... *tabrūt mūši* means basically 'nocturnal revelation'.¹⁰

MAŠ is the Sumerogram used in liver omen texts for *barû* 'examine' and for the cognate noun *bîru* 'inspection of omens'; *tabrûtu* 'viewing, sight' is from the same root. The Aeschylean phrase that appears on the surface as a casual poetic periphrasis turns out to reflect a language of divination derived from Mesopotamia.

The wind of God

On her next appearance the Queen observes that a wave of troubles makes people afraid of everything, whereas when the *daimon* (the divine power responsible for one's personal fortunes) is in fair flow, they trust all too confidently 'that he will constantly send the same favouring wind of fortune'.¹¹ In several other tragic passages we find the idea of good or ill fortune expressed in the image of a wind which is sent or controlled by a divine agent, or of a *daimon* who comes in the form of a wind.

With an eventual wind-change of mood, the *daimon*
may perhaps come altered, with gentler blowing.

But what if Zeus is to make a wind-change in our ills sometime?

Do nothing violent, or you will suffer violence
when the god's wind (θεοῦ πνεῦμα) happens to change for you.¹²

¹⁰ Pers. 518, PV 645; Oppenheim (1956), 225 f.

¹¹ Pers. 602 τὸν αὐτὸν αἰὲν ἄνεμον οὐρεῖν τύχης. αἰὲν ἄνεμον is Weil's emendation of αἰὲν δαίμον, where δαίμον comes from the preceding line; but the notion of wind is present in any case (οὐρεῖν).

¹² Sept. 705-8, Cho. 775, Eur. H.F. 215 f. There are many other places where the wind metaphor is used of fortune without reference to a god.

In several Babylonian poems of the later second millennium we read of a god's good or bad wind (*šāru šābu* or *lā šābu*) directed towards an individual. Of a man beset by afflictions it is said that 'by the god's unfavourable wind he [is driven] to madness'. The sufferer of the *Theodicy* is advised 'look for the favourable wind of the gods (v.l. god); what you lost over a year, you will recover in a trice'. A number of prayers contain a petition such as 'may your favourable wind blow upon me'. Marduk is hymned as 'the god of the favourable wind'. The concept is reflected in many Akkadian personal names, such as Šār-Aššur ('Wind of Aššur'), Tāb-šār-Ištar ('The wind of Ishtar is good'), Ina-šār-Marduk-allak ('I walk in the wind of Marduk').¹³

The Darius episode

In her despair, the Queen resolves to raise the ghost of her dead husband from the underworld in order to seek his counsel. She charges the chorus to make the requisite invocations to the infernal deities and to Darius, while she busies herself with libations. They do this, praying to the chthonic gods (Earth, Hermes, and Hades) to send Darius' soul up to the light, and summoning his late majesty with cries of 'Oi!' He duly appears and converses with them and with his widow.

I said a little in chapter 1 (pp. 50 f.) about the practice of necromancy in the Near East, and mentioned Assurbanipal's consultation of his deceased mother. In general an appeal to the dead for help was not directed towards just any ghost, but particularly to the *ešem kimti*, one's family ghost.¹⁴ For the address to the gods of the lower world asking them to release their guest we may compare the Hurro-Hittite purification ritual described on p. 426, and also a damaged and obscure passage in *The Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*, where the prince prays:

'Allatum, Allatum, mistress of the earth ... May [the ghost] of the vanished orphan girl show me her face ... [A]t the utterance of your weighty name, at the comma[n]d of your great divinity, she will come up ...'¹⁵

The Darius episode is in many respects extraordinarily similar to the biblical account of how the spirit of the prophet Samuel was raised by

the witch of Endor at the behest of the mercurial King Saul. Table 3 sets out the points of comparison. There are, of course, certain differences. Firstly, Samuel had not been king of Israel, though he had been the nation's leader. The consultation of a dead prophet recalls Odysseus' consultation of Teiresias. Secondly, Saul is dependent on a specialist medium, to whom alone the risen ghost is visible, though Saul too is able to hear his words. The Persian Queen also makes use of an intermediary to call up Darius, but in the economy of the play it is the chorus that must

TABLE 3. *The consultations of the spirits of Darius and Samuel*

1 Sam. 28	Persae
King Saul, fearful about the outcome of the impending battle with the Philistines, instigates evocation of the ghost of the previous ruler.	The Queen, fearful because of the disastrous outcome of war with the Greeks, instigates evocation of the ghost of the previous ruler.
He exchanges his royal garments for ordinary clothing and goes on foot to Endor (8).	She has put off her finery and comes to the elders on foot instead of in her car (607 f.).
He instructs the witch to raise Samuel (8-11).	She instructs the elders to raise Darius (620 f.).
She reports that she sees a god coming up out of the earth; and that he is wrapped in a robe (13 f.).	They call for the great <i>daimon</i> , god of the Persians, to be allowed up, and he is seen rising from the earth. His tiara and shoes are described (640-3, 658 ff.).
Saul prostrates himself (14).	The elders are afraid to look on him or speak (694-6).
Samuel asks, 'Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?' (15).	Darius asks why there is so much noise and lamentation, and why he has been summoned (681 ff.).
Saul tells him of the Philistine threat, and says he has summoned him in the hope that he will tell him what to do (15).	The Queen tells him about the military disaster (714 ff.). It is thought that he may know a remedy (631 f., 787-9).
Samuel declares that 'Yahweh has done to you as he spoke through me': he has turned from Saul and torn the kingdom from his hand to give to David. It is Saul's fault for disobeying Yahweh (16-18).	Darius declares that a prophecy has been fulfilled; Zeus has visited it on Xerxes rather than some later king because of his irreligious folly (739 ff.).
Samuel goes on to prophesy that the rout of Israel will be complete on the morrow. Yahweh will give the army into the Philistines' hand (19).	Darius goes on to prophesy an even greater defeat at Plataea; Zeus is a stern chastiser of arrogance (797-828).
Saul collapses in dread at Samuel's words (20).	The elders and Queen express their dismay at Darius' message (843-8).

¹³ Great Prayer to Ishtar (W. G. Lambert, *AJO* 19, 1959/60, 52; Foster, 517) 151; *Theodicy* 241 f., Oppenheim (1956), 233, cf. Great Prayer to Marduk (Lambert, op. cit. 57; Foster, 522) 58; *En. el.* VII 20; E. Unger, *Babylon. Die heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier*, Berlin & Leipzig 1931, 130. God's or Yahweh's wind, *rûah 'ēlōhīm* or *Yahweh*, is a common concept in the Old Testament, but it is mainly responsible for prophetic ecstasy, inspired leadership, and the like, not for good or bad fortune.

¹⁴ Tropper, 104.

¹⁵ *Pers.* 628-30, 640-3, cf. *Cho.* 489 f.; *CPLM* no. 32 obv. 30-4.

take on this role. The ghost is clearly visible to them, and there is nothing in the text to indicate that he is not also visible to her (and to the audience). There remains a remarkable series of detailed correspondences. Aeschylus had not, of course, read the First Book of Samuel. The narrative scheme must have travelled more widely.

Darius had expected that the prophesied disasters would not come about for a long time, but he now understands that Xerxes' behaviour has led Zeus to bring them forward. He explains the relationship between divine and human initiative by means of the proverbial-sounding line

But when one makes an effort, God too lends a hand.

Variant formulations of the same idea occur elsewhere in tragedy. It is paralleled in the Assyrian bilingual proverb collection which we have had occasion to cite in other contexts:

When you put your mind to it, your god is yours;
when you do not put your mind to it, your god is not yours.¹⁶

Reviewing the history of the empire, Darius traces it back to a grant by Zeus of the privilege that one man should rule over all Asia. This corresponds entirely to the Near Eastern ideology of kingship. Besides the material cited in chapter 3, mention may be made of the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar in which he prays to Marduk and says 'it was you who created me and entrusted me with the kingship over all the peoples'.¹⁷

Where are they now?

When the dishevelled Xerxes arrives, the elders engage him in semi-lyric dialogue, giving vent to their grief and recriminations. They demand to know—though they can well guess—what has become of all the fine and distinguished men who had accompanied him.

Where is the remaining company of your friends?
Where are your comrades, men like Pharandakes,
Sousas, Pelagon, and Datamas,
Psammis and Sousiskanes from Ecbatana? ...
Where is your Pharnouchos

¹⁶ *Pers.* 742, cf. fr. 395, *Soph.* fr. 407, 927, *Eur.* *El.* 80 f., *I.T.* 910 f., fr. 432, *Trag. adesp.* 527, and Fraenkel on *Ag.* 811 (p. 373); *BWL* 227, 23–6 (with Lambert's note, 231).

¹⁷ *Pers.* 762 f.; above, p. 134; Langdon, 124 i 63–5, 140 ix 49–51 (*Seux*, 509, 506; *Foster*, 744, 741).

and noble Arlomardos?
Where is lord Seualkes, or highborn Lilaïos,
Memphis, Tharybis, and Masistras,
Artembares and Hystaichmas?

Formally these are real rather than rhetorical questions. Xerxes gives the painful answers. Yet the passage recalls oriental texts in which rhetorical questions of the form 'where are all those great men now?' are used to develop the theme that 'the glory is departed'. In the Old Babylonian 'Ballade des héros du temps jadis' we read:

Human life is not lasting.
Where is Alulu, who lived for 36,000 years?
Where is Entena (Etana), who flew up to heaven?
Where is Gilgamesh, who sought after (eternal) life like Ziusudra?
Where is Huwawa, after he was done homage and caught?
Where is Enkidu, who [...]ed the strong men in the land?
Where is Bazi? Where is Zizi?
Where are the great kings, (all) those from former days till now?

In a menacing message said to have been sent by Sennacherib to Hezekiah, the king of Judah is reminded of all the kingdoms that have fallen to Assyrian might: 'Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Separwaim, Hena', and 'Iwwah?'¹⁸

SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

In the first part of the *Seven against Thebes* the focus is on the impending attack on the city, and the chorus's songs serve to portray the fear and apprehension of its female population. In their opening lyrics we have to picture them jostling excitedly on the citadel and looking out across country to where they can see the dust raised by the approaching enemy. They utter urgent prayers to the gods for deliverance. Their despairing question,

Who will rescue us, who will aid us, of gods or goddesses?

was not a novel one, or specifically Greek; some 750 years earlier an Assyrian poet had represented the Kassite Kaštiliaš, faced with the prospect of defeat in war, as asking himself 'Who is the god who will spare my people from [disaster]?'¹⁹

¹⁸ *Pers.* 956–72; 'Ballade des héros', see reference in ch. 2, n. 76; 2 Ki. 19. 13.

¹⁹ *Sept.* 92–4; *Tuk.-Nin.* iii A 38'.

In another chorus they describe the destruction, terror, and misery that afflict a captured city: the women and girls dragged away, the infants torn from the breast, the slaughter, the burning, the wailing, the looting. Such scenes could no doubt have been drawn from the life. At the same time it may be noted that they had a place in Mesopotamian literary tradition, going back to the Sumerian genre of the lament for the destroyed temple or city. In the *Lament for Ur*, for instance, we find such verses as

In its high gate and gangways corpses were piled ...
The old men and women who could not leave the house
were consigned to the flames.
The little ones, asleep on their mothers' laps,
were carried off like fishes by the water.
On their nurses of strong arms
the strong arms were (pried) open ...
Spouses were deserted in the city,
children deserted, goods scattered around.

In an Akkadian fragment from a sixth-century tablet, where another destruction of Ur is described, we read:

The young men's [blood] is poured out,
[the g]irls are slaughtered in their chambers lik[e sheep].
The remaining daughters the foe was sweeping off to [].

Nahum writes in similar vein in prophesying the fall of Nineveh:

In the streets the chariots rage madly ...
The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved;
the mistress(?) is stripped, is taken up, and her maids are led away
as (with) the voice of doves, drumming upon their breasts ...
Plunder silver, plunder gold! There is no end to the provisions;
it is laden with all desirable goods.²⁰

Besides human savagery and suffering, Aeschylus includes a vignette of the wastage of the city's stores:

Fruits of all kinds, fallen on the ground, pain the eye,
having found ill-disposed storekeepers;
abundant, in indiscriminate confusion,
earth's bounty rolls about in useless billows.

The Sumerian lament offers similar pictures:

²⁰ Sept. 321–56; Jacobsen, 460–2; LKU 43. 5–7; Nah. 2. 5(4) ff.

In the country's storehouses,
abounding and abounding as they were, fires were lit ...
My stores forsooth rose, taking wings
like the rising of a heavy cloud of locusts.
My stores—the ones who came from the south
verily took them south—let me cry: 'My stores!'
My stores—the ones who came from the north
verily took them north—let me cry: 'My stores!'

Nargon relates in the account of his eighth campaign how 'I opened their piled-up granaries and let my troops devour grain without measure ... They drew the sweet wine in their waterskins and pails like river waters.' Jeremiah's Yahweh calls upon Babylon's enemies to do likewise to her:

Come at her to the last man, open her granaries;
pile her up like heaps of grain, and devote her to destruction,
and she shall have no remnant.²¹

A further typical motif in such contexts is the transfer of the slave-girls to new masters with new demands. Aeschylus' verses on the subject are corrupt and difficult to understand; a tentative translation of an emended text runs:

And the young slave-girls in fresh woe
patient<ly accept> the {captive} bed
of the man who prospers, as, with enemy supreme,
they can expect a night-time consummation
to break on top of their tear-drenched distress.

From the *Lament for Ur* we may perhaps compare:

My child slave-girls
were verily driven off from their mothers(?) captive .
Ah, woe is me! In the enemy cities
my slave girls have been taught the enemy peculiarities²²

The long episode following this chorus is notable for its rigid formal structure, with the Scout making seven speeches, one for each of the seven heroes attacking Thebes, and Eteocles replying to each one with his dispositions of seven defenders; after each pair of speeches the chorus sings a short strophe. The whole slow sequence is like a prolonged drum-roll, heightening the tension and leading up to the climax which

²¹ Sept. 357–62; Jacobsen, 462, 464 f.; Thureau-Dangin, 36 lines 219 f. (restored from line 295); Jer. 50. 26.

²² Sept. 363–8; Jacobsen, 465.

comes with the seventh pair of heroes: Polynices to be faced by Eteocles himself. C. Fries drew a comparison with the sequence of seven gates in the *Descent of Ishtar*, at each of which the goddess is divested of some part of her apparel until she is finally naked.²³

The number of seven heroes is of course a datum of the pro-Aeschylean myth. Seven is, to be sure, a strikingly 'oriental' number, and there are other grounds for suspecting that the myth has a basis in Semitic lore, as we have seen in chapter 9 (pp. 455-7). Ishtar's descent has little in common with it beyond the number seven. Yet Fries's comparison does point up the fact that the highly formalized, almost incantatory treatment of the seven items in seven matching blocks of text is altogether more reminiscent of Near Eastern literary procedure (Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic) than of Greek. It raises the question whether some Semitic literary model may not indirectly—via the epic *Thebaid*—have been the source of the pattern that Aeschylus here employs.

Two points of detail in this section of the play call for comment. In his first speech the Scout reports that Tydeus is wild for the fight,

like a horse snorting over his bit in his strength,
one who is raring to go as he awaits the call of the trumpet.

The simile recalls the famous biblical image of the war-horse:

The grandeur of his snorting is a terror.
He paws the plain, and rejoices in his strength ...
and he does not take confidence save at the sound of the trumpet.
As the trumpet requires he says 'Ha!';
he gets wind of the battle from afar,
the uproar of the captains, and the signal.²⁴

The other point is the reference in Eteocles' sixth speech to the misfortune of the righteous man who finds himself in an impious community and is caught up in the punishment which heaven inflicts upon it: he perishes, 'struck by the communal scourge (μῶστις) of God'. This metaphorical instrument is already mentioned in the *Iliad* in the context of military disasters; here for the first time we meet it applied to the chastisement of sin. The Akkadian and Old Testament parallels have been cited on p. 116.

In the very last preserved verse of Aeschylus' play, before the interpolated final scene, the chorus conclude that the bodies of Eteocles

and Polynices should be buried in the place of greatest honour, 'as a woe laid to sleep beside their father', πῆμα πατρὶ πάρευνον. This resembles a very common Hebrew expression, applied especially to the death of a king, *yiskab 'im 'ābôtāiw*, 'he lay down with his fathers'. It is thought that this may originally have referred to burial in the family grave (as in Aeschylus), though it does not have such an implication in the Old Testament. There is a difference of detail in that the Greek, with natural regard to Oedipus' significance in the myth, refers to 'father' in the singular.²⁵

ZEUS ORIENTALIZED

Following the chronological sequence of Aeschylus' preserved tragedies, we shall come next to the *Suppliants*. This is a suitable juncture at which to consider the many new features of Aeschylus' conception of Zeus that make their appearance in the plays of his last years, especially the *Suppliants* and *Agamemnon*.

Let us start from the famous invocation in the *Suppliants*,

ἄναξ ἀνάκτων, μακάρων
μακάρτατε καὶ τελέων
τελειότατον κράτος, ὄλβιε Ζεῦ.

Lord of lords, most blessed of the blessed ones
and most powerful of powers, felicitous Zeus.

Unprecedented and indeed almost unparalleled in Greek, this is an absolutely clear imitation of divine titles current in the Near East. Not only were deities addressed there with individual expressions such as 'lord of lords', 'king of kings', 'god of gods'; it was common for two or three such phrases to be juxtaposed, as in the Aeschylean passage. Thus an Akkadian-Hittite bilingual has the combination 'mistress of mistresses, goddess of goddesses'. Enlil is addressed in Assyrian prayers as 'lord of lords, king of kings'. On a stele of Nabonidus at Harran, Sin is called 'Enlil of the gods, king of kings, lord of lords'. Similarly in the Old Testament: 'For Yahweh your god is the god of gods and lord of lords'; 'the god of gods ... the lord of lords'. There are also Egyptian parallels.²⁶ It is to be noted that according to Semitic idiom 'king of

²³ *Sept.* 375-676; Fries, 384.

²⁴ *Sept.* 393 f., cf. *Soph. El.* 25-7; *Job* 39. 20-5.

²⁵ *Sept.* 1004; 1 Ki. 2. 10 and often. Cf. Tromp, 169-71.

²⁶ *Supp.* 524-6; *CTH* 312 (E. Reiner and H. G. Güterbock, *JCS* 21, 1967, 257); *KAR* 68 (Seux, 272, cf. 274; Foster, 562, cf. 564); W. Röllig, *ZA* 56, 1964, 221 ii 20 (*ANET* 562 f.; Foster, 757); cf. Tallqvist (1938), 12, 42, 237; *Deut.* 10. 17, *Ps.* 136. 2 f., cf. 84. 8(7), *Dan.* 8. 25, J. Gwyn Griffiths,

kings' or 'god of gods' does not mean a king who rules over kings or a god whom other gods worship, but (like 'song of songs') the most kingly among kings, the most divine among deities. By coupling ἀνάκτων ἀνάκτων with the superlative phrases μακάρων μακάρτατε and τελείων τελειότατον κράτος, Aeschylus implies that he understands it in the same way.²⁷

Already in Homer Zeus is entitled 'the highest'. This was illustrated with oriental parallels in chapter 3 (p. 114). In the *Supplices* Aeschylus has the new formulation 'he does not pay homage to the power of anyone sitting above him', οὐπινος ἀνωθεν ἡμένου σέβει κράτη. A comparable statement may be quoted from the Ugaritic Baal epic:

Victorious Baal is our king,
our judge; there is none who is above him.²⁸

In the same chorus Zeus is described as 'reigning through age without end', δι' αἰῶνος κρέων ἀπαύτου. One could not look for a closer equivalent to the biblical declarations that

Yahweh is king for ever and aye (*melek 'ôlām wā'ed*).

Thou, O Yahweh, dost sit for eternity:
thy throne is for ever and ever.

'King for ever', *mlk 'lm*, already occurs as a divine title at Ugarit. '*lm*' of eternity, = the eternal' is also attached to the names of individual gods such as Shapshu/Shamash at Ugarit and Karatepe, El or Elohim in the Old Testament.²⁹

From his high station Zeus keeps watch on human injustice:

Look out for the Lookout above,
the guardian of toiling mortals
who supplicate their neighbours and do not
receive their due.

The Hebrew God does likewise:

Yahweh looks out from heaven; he sees all the sons of man.
From his established seat he gazes
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
he who fashioned their hearts one and all,
he who sees into all their deeds.³⁰

Aeschylus lays a novel emphasis on the depth and profundity of Zeus' thinking. His wishes are not easy to track down,

for the paths of his mind
stretch thick-grown and deep in shadow,
and cannot be pointed out to the view.

His intellect is vast, insuperable, 'a bottomless vista'. Again we may quote the Hebrew poets:

How great are thy works, Yahweh:
very deep are thy thoughts/designs.

He does not tire and he does not grow weary:
there is no searching out his cleverness.

The Sumerian poet of a hymn to Enlil already describes the complexity of the god's mind in imagery that Aeschylus would not have disdained:

Enlil, by your skilful planning in intricate designs—
their inner workings a blur of threads not to be unravelled,
thread entwined in thread, not to be traced by the eye—
you excel in your task of divine providence.

In another Sumerian work, the *Cylinders of Gudea*, Enlil's son Ningirsu is said to have a heart 'unfathomable as inmost heaven'; the same expression is used of the heart of God in the Babylonian *Theodicy*. Marduk is praised in *Enūma eliš* as having an extensive wisdom and a heart so profound (*rūqu*, lit. 'remote') that none of the other gods can grasp it. Similar thoughts about the inscrutability of God are expressed in other Akkadian texts.³¹

Mysterious in his designs, but mighty, the Aeschylean Zeus is a unique being whose nature cannot be apprehended but who commands faith.

Classical Philology 48, 1953, 145–54 = his *Atlantis and Egypt. With Other Selected Essays*, Cardiff 1991, 252–65. See further Fris Johansen–Whittle, (as ch. 9, n. 25), ii, 408–10.

²⁷ Cf. Gesenius–Kautzsch (as ch. 5, n. 140), 452 (§ 133b); Johansen–Whittle, loc. cit.

²⁸ *Supp.* 597; *KTU* 1. 3 v 33 = 4 iv 44.

²⁹ *Supp.* 574; Ps. 10. 16, Lam. 5. 19; *KTU* 1. 108 obv. 1, rev. 4, 6, 7; C. Virolleaud, *PRU* v, Paris 1965, 8 obv. 7; *KAI* 26 = *SSI* iii. 52 no. 15 A iii 19; Gen. 21. 33, Isa. 40. 28; cf. Cross, 16–20; West (1971), 35 f.

³⁰ *Supp.* 381–4; Ps. 33. 13–15.

³¹ *Supp.* 93–5, 1049, 1057 f.; Ps. 92. 6(5), Isa. 40. 28; Jacobsen, 109, 396; *Theodicy* 256 f.; *En. d.* VII 117 f., cf. *BWL* 265 rev. 7 (Foster, 346), *CPLM* no. 1 obv. 17, 26–9 (Foster, 715 f.), 33 obv. 4'. Cf. also *KTU* 1. 3 v 30 f. = 4 iv 41 f., 'Your decree, El, is wise; your wisdom is for ever.'

Zeus, whoever he may be ...
 I cannot find a likeness (for him)—
 though I try everything in the scales—
 save Zeus (himself), if the vain burden of thought
 is truly to be shed.

Once again Aeschylus is voicing sentiments which were new to Greece but not so new in the East:

To whom will you liken El,
 or what likeness will you set against him?

For who is God apart from Yahweb,
 or who is a rock except our God?³²

Zeus alone controls the outcome of events and the fulfilment of human expectations:

What of these things is not bought forth by the mind of Zeus?

What is fulfilled for mortals without Zeus?
 What of these things is not divinely ordained?

Such rhetorical questions, equivalent to statements of divine power, are quite at home in Akkadian. In the Old Babylonian *Agušaya* hymn the gods, faced with the job of creating a new goddess to demanding specifications, say to Ea:

This undertaking is surely suited to you:
 who can effect (anything), where you cannot?

Sargon II in his hymn to Nanaya asks 'Without her who can do what?', and Nabonidus applies the same formula to Marduk and Sin in inscriptions at Larsa and Harran. We may also cite the lines from *Ludlul*:

Apart from Marduk, who restores his dead to life?
 But for Sarpanitum, which goddess grants breath?³³

SUPPLICES

We will now proceed with other matters that arise in the *Supplices* or make their initial appearance there.

³² Ag. 160–6; Isa. 40. 18; Ps. 18. 32(31) = 2 Sam. 22. 32.

³³ *Supp.* 599, Ag. 1487, cf. *Supp.* 823; *Agušaya* A v 20 (Foster, 81); *CPLM* no. 4 rev. ii 9'; Langdon, 238. 38 (Seux, 516; Foster, 752); C. J. Gadd, *An. Stud.* 8, 1958, 60 (H2, A ii 25 f.); *Ludlul* IV 33 f.; cf. *Erra* III D 12 f.

The first is the metaphor of the 'tablets of the heart', upon which a message may be inscribed for accurate and lasting preservation. Danaus in his first speech following the parodos urges his daughters to listen to his prudent advice and to φυλάξαι τὰμ' ἔπη δελτουμένας, 'put my words under guard, tableting them for yourselves', which of course does not mean making notes of them on memo pads. The image recurs in the *Eumenides*, where the chorus sing that Hades is a great corrector of mortals who 'watches over everything with tablet-writing mind'; that is, he keeps a sure mental record of the sins that he observes. In the *Prometheus* we find a use closer to that in the *Supplices*. Prometheus undertakes to tell Io of the route that she must follow across the continents, and instructs her to 'inscribe it on the memory-tablets of your mind'.

The folding wooden writing-tablet came to Greece from the Levant together with writing, and the Semitic word *dalt* or *delt*, whose primary meaning is 'door', became the Greek *deltos*, which is the word used in all the above passages. It would not be too surprising if metaphorical uses of the object could also be traced back to the Semitic East, and in fact the precise phrase 'tablet of the heart' (though with a different word for 'tablet', *lûah*) is found more than once in the Old Testament:

Let loyalty and fidelity not forsake you:
 bind them round your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

The sin of Judah is written with a stylus of iron,
 with a nib of emery it is carved on the tablet of their heart.³⁴

Another more or less figurative use of *deltos* appears in a fragment from an unidentified play of Aeschylus, where the personification of Righteousness, Dike, explains that she ensures that foolish wrongdoers get their deserts by writing down their offences on the tablet of Zeus. Her interlocutor asks when this register of evils is opened and consulted. Her fragmentary answer seems to say something like 'when their appointed day comes'. This book-keeping Zeus with his recording angel is something very new in Greek theology, and he never became at home there.³⁵ The origins of the notion are to be sought, and found, in the

³⁴ *Supp.* 179, *Eum.* 275, *PV* 789, cf. *Cho.* 450 f., *Soph.* fr. 597, *Phil.* 1325; Prov. 3. 3, cf. 7. 3; Jer. 17. 1, cf. 31. 33; Brown, 53 f.

³⁵ Fr. 281a. 21–3; the notion is criticized in Eur. fr. 506. Wilamowitz spoke of 'die bei den Hellenen seltene, den Semiten vertraute Lehre' (*Kl. Schr.* i. 454), while Fraenkel says that it, 'though more familiar to us from Semitic sources, is a genuine Hellenic belief'—because it is attested in tragedy! (*CQ* 36, 1942, 11 = *Kl. Beitr.* ii. 39). He is discussing its adaptation by Diphilus (Plaut. *Rud.* 9–16), who portrayed the stars as observing men's conduct and reporting it daily in writing to Zeus. Cf. also F. Solmsen, *CQ* 38, 1944, 27–30 = *Kl. Schr.* i, Hildesheim 1968, 137–40.

Mesopotamian world with the inveterate bureaucracy of its palaces, from where it spread to Israel. In his prophetic dream vision of the nether world Enkidu saw Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Earth, and before her knelt her scribe Belet-šeri, who read aloud continually from a tablet. This was probably not a register of sinners but of all persons doomed for death. Yahweh, however, has a book devoted to a list of the righteous.

And a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared Yahweh and who had consideration for his name. 'They shall be mine,' says the Lord of Hosts, 'for the day on which I make property, and I will spare them for I spare his son who serves him.'

Moses asks him to forgive the people's sin; but if he will not,

'then wipe me out of your book which you have written.' And Yahweh said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against me, I will wipe out of my book.'

In later Jewish writing we find more explicit references to heavenly registers of both good and wicked, to every sin being written down every day before the Most High, and to the angel who unfolds the roll in which sins are recorded and accuses their authors before the Lord—a picture corresponding perfectly to the Aeschylean fragment.³⁶

Presently Danaus recommends his daughters to pray to the gods whose images are grouped nearby. Several are mentioned individually. To his line

Now call also upon Zeus' bird here,

they reply

We call upon the saving rays of the Sun.

The extraordinary equivalence of the Sun with 'Zeus' bird', a phrase which normally signifies the eagle, suggests a visible symbol of the solar deity equipped at least with wings and perhaps other bird features. This must be either the winged disc of Assyrian and other West Asiatic art or the Egyptian(izing) Sun-falcon.³⁷

A few lines later Danaus enunciates the doctrine that misdeeds in this life are judged after death by 'another Zeus' in the underworld. We saw in the last chapter that this conception was a recent arrival in Greece. The 'other Zeus' is the same as 'he of the earth, that most hospitable Zeus of the dead' (156 f.), the 'Zeus of the earth' who is sometimes

³⁶ *GlG* VII 194 f.; *Mal.* 3. 16 f.; *Exod.* 32. 32 f.; cf. *Ps.* 69. 29(28), 139. 16; *Jub.* 30. 22 f.; *1 Enoch* 98. 7 f., 104. 7; *Anon. Apoc.* 2. 14 ff. (p. 923 Sparks).

³⁷ *Supp.* 212 f.; cf. Johansen-Whittle (as ch. 9, n. 25), ii. 170-2; Hall, 144-6. For the solar falcon see above, p. 408.

equated with Hades or Pluto. We have seen elsewhere that this is paralleled by the Sumerian and Akkadian 'Enlil of the earth' as a title of Nergal, the lord of the underworld.³⁸

In the following scene between the Danaids and Pelasgus, the king of Argos, they refer to him as ruling 'on single-sceptred throne'. This happens to be the earliest passage in Greek literature where sceptre and throne appear together as the symbols of kingship; Pindar and Sophocles provide further examples. The sceptre already occurs in the *Iliad*, and we have noted that it is a Near Eastern attribute of the king (pp. 17, 134 f.) But sceptre and throne are often coupled in the oriental literatures. The early Hittite king Anitta received an iron stool and an iron crook as gifts of submission from the king of Puruškanda. In *Enūma eliš*, when Marduk is made king of the gods,

they gave him sceptre, throne, and staff of office.

He and other gods are sometimes praised with the title 'giver of sceptre and throne' (to the king). In the West Semitic area sceptre and throne are conventionally used in parallel clauses. Mot in the Baal epic is warned that El will overthrow him:

'He will overturn your royal throne,
he will break your judicial sceptre.'

The eleventh-century sarcophagus of King Aḥiram of Byblos carries a curse on the enemy who comes and uncovers it: 'may his judicial sceptre be torn away(?), may his royal throne be overturned'. Similarly in the Psalms:

You have abolished his sceptre, and cast his throne to the ground.³⁹

The next stasimon in the *Supplices* is the one beginning 'Lord of lords, most blessed of the blessed ones', several parts of which were discussed in the preceding section under the heading of 'Zeus orientalized'. One further passage from it deserves attention:

Which of the gods could I with reason
invoke for deeds with a more righteous claim?

³⁸ *Supp.* 230 f.; above, pp. 537, 373.

³⁹ *Supp.* 374; *Pind. Pyth.* 4. 152, *Soph. O.C.* 425, 448 f., 1354; E. Neu, *Der Anitta-Text* (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten, 18), Wiesbaden 1974, 14 line 74 (*CTH* 1); *En. el.* IV 29, cf. *CPLM* no. 39 rev. 23, 47 obv. 3; *Tallqvist* (1938), 136; *KTU* i. 6 vi 28 f.; *KAI* 1 = *SSI* iii. 14 no. 4 (*ANET* 661); *Ps.* 89. 45(44) (reading *maṭṭehū* for *ṭmīḥārō* 'his purity').

We saw that rhetorical questions about Zeus sometimes have models in oriental religious formulae, and so it is with this one. In a Babylonian hymn to Nabu, perhaps of the seventh century, the poet asks,

Which (other) [cr]eator of all inhabited places
should I name, of all parts of the world?⁴⁰

In the next stasimon the Danaids pray that Argos may be ravaged by no 'danceless, lyreless, tear-generating war'. Situations of gloom and misery are often characterized in tragedy by the absence of music, especially that of the lyre. An eighth-century Aramaic treaty inscription from Sefire provides the earliest attestation of this motif. The king of Arpad lays curses upon himself and his kingdom if he should deal falsely with the king of KTK: tempests, plagues of locusts and worms, blighted crops, and so forth. 'And let the voice of the lyre (*knr*) not be heard in Arpad and among its people, but affliction and uproar and crying and wailing.'⁴¹

The Danaids pray further that the Argives' sacrifices may be accompanied by pious hymns, and that their utterance may go forth 'from pure mouths', ἀγνῶν ἐκ στομάτων. The same expression recurs in the *Eumenides*, where Orestes declares that he calls upon Athena 'from pure mouth' to come to his assistance. We may compare the Hebrew invocation

Give ear to my prayer, not from lips of deceit.⁴²

Threatened with the arrival of the sons of Aegyptus, the Danaids are terror-struck and wonder where they can flee or hide. They wish they could turn into smoke, rise to the sky, and so vanish. The lyrical expression of the desire to escape from the present situation, for example by flying away as a bird, becomes something of a tragic commonplace, but turning into smoke is an unusual and surprising idea, paralleled only in Aristophanes' *Wasps*. (The departure of a soul like smoke is a special case, see p. 151.) In Akkadian prayers and incantations for deliverance from evil, however, there is a recurrent formula by which one wishes, not that one may oneself go up to the sky like smoke, but that the evil may do so.⁴³ The Aeschylean passage may represent an adaptation of this motif to the format of the escape-wish.

⁴⁰ *Supp.* 590 f.; *LKA* 16 (E. Ebeling, *Die Welt des Orients* 1, 1947–52, 477. 6; Seux, 135; Foster, 618).

⁴¹ *Supp.* 681, cf. Johansen-Whittle (as ch. 9, n. 25), iii. 46 f.; *KAI* 222 = *SSI* ii. 31 no. 7 ia. 29 f.

⁴² *Supp.* 696, *Eum.* 287, Ps. 17. 1.

⁴³ *Supp.* 779, cf. *Ar. Vesp.* 324; E. Ebeling, *MVAG* 23.2, 1919, 4 (*VAT* 8261) obv. ii 5 (Seux, 438); Ebeling (1931), 142. 22 (Seux, 418, Foster, 561); R. Caplice, *Or.* NS 39, 1970, 135. 15 (Seux,

War as litigation before the gods

The Egyptian herald, denied possession of the Danaids for his masters, warns Pelasgus that this may mean war.

'Ares does not adjudicate these matters
by hearing witness, or resolve the dispute
with taking of money: no, there must first be many
fallings of men and kickings-off of lives.'

The settling of a dispute by warfare is here represented as a form of litigation in which the War-god decides the case, not by weighing the strength of opposing testimonies or arguments but by setting the two sides to fight it out; the matter is settled not by a monetary award, but by bloodshed. The idea is already suggested in the Homeric phrase στυγερῶι κρίνεσθαι ἄρηι, 'sort out one's differences by horrid battle'. Aeschylus develops it further in the *Agamemnon*, firstly when he calls Menelaus Priam's great adversary-at-law (ἀντίδικος), and then when Agamemnon announces that with the gods' help he has exacted the just penalty from the Trojans:

For the gods heard the case, not orally
but in men's deaths, and for Ilion's destruction
into the bloody urn unanimous
they placed their votes.

This notion of victory being awarded by a divine judgment had long been familiar in the Near East. Already in the third millennium Naram-Sin, in an inscription commemorating his conquest of the cities Armanum and Ebla, uses the expression 'When Dagan gave the verdict for Naram-Sin the strong'. A thousand years later Tukulti-Ninurta is represented as sending a message to the Kassite king complaining of broken treaties and telling him that the case will be decided by battle:

'When we meet in battle let [Shamash?] judge the case between us.
We shall meet on that day like a just man who despoils a criminal.
Peace will not be established without conflict []
Good relations will not be created without a fight until []
[] ...

So come onto the subjects' battlefield, let us settle the case.'⁴⁴

357; Foster, 647); W. G. Lambert, *AFO* 23, 1970, 40. 15 (Foster, 857), 41. 33; *KAR* 252 ii 6–18 (Oppenheim [1956], 302).

⁴⁴ *Supp.* 934–7, *Ag.* 41, 813–16, cf. my *Studies in Aeschylus*, Stuttgart 1990, 204 f.; *Il.* 2. 385, 18. 209, cf. *Hes. Th.* 882; D. R. Frayne, *RIME* ii. 133 Naram-Sin 26 ii 29–m 6 (Foster, 52), *Tuk.-Nin.* iii A 13–19.

The assimilation of fighting to litigation was perhaps the easier for Akkadian-speakers in that their verb *gerû* 'attack, proceed against' is used equally in both connections. But we find it also in Hittite texts. In a ritual to be performed before battle the god Zithariya is represented as complaining to the other gods about the occupation of his sanctuaries by the enemy. 'So pass judgment on his case, all you gods! Let there be great compensation for the gods!' His loss is also their loss, so 'pass judgment on your own case, pass judgment on Zithariya's case! O gods, destroy the Kaska land!' The Hittite kings in their inscriptions refer to their victories as the result of a god's making a judicial decision (*hannessar hanna*).⁴⁵

The idea is also attested in the Old Testament. Jephthah reproaches the Ammonites for making war, and declares that 'Yahweh the judge will judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon'. A psalmist recalls how Yahweh broke the enemy's weapons and paralysed them:

From heaven thou didst make thy judgment heard:
earth was afraid, and kept its peace.

Another sings that

He will give judgment to the nations, filling (them) with corpses.⁴⁶

AGAMEMNON

The play begins with the Watchman speaking of his year-long vigil on Clytaemestra's roof. He has come to know 'the assembly (δμήρυριν) of the stars of the night', those that bring winter and those that bring summer, 'shining potentates, resplendent in heaven'. The word 'potentates' (δυνάστας) has not aroused as much surprise as it might. Headlam claimed that it was an astrological term. But since, in Housman's words, 'Aeschylus knew no more of astrology than of Christianity or of the pox', more recent commentators have acquiesced in the scholiast's explanation that the word refers simply to what has just been mentioned, the stars' bringing of the seasons. But it is extraordinary in Greek terms

⁴⁵ KUB iv. 1. 19 ff. (M. Witzel, *Hethitische Keilschrift-Urkunden*, Fulda 1924, 60-2; CTH 422; ANET 354), KBo iii. 4 li 14 (A. Götz, *MVAG* 38, 1933, 46; CTH 61), KUB i. 1 iii 72 f. (A. Götz, *MVAG* 29 3, 1925, 28-30; CTH 81), KUB xiv. 8/10/11 § 4. 8 (A. Götz, *Kleinasiatische Forschungen* 1, 1930, 210; CTH 378; ANET 395).

⁴⁶ Jdg. 11. 27; Ps 76. 9(8), 110. 6, cf. Jer. 1. 15 f. For the conception of God as a judge cf. Tallqvist (1938), 79 ff.; CPLM no. 2 obv. 21 f., rev. 10; Jdg. 11. 27, 1 Sam. 24. 12, 15, 1 Ki. 8. 32, Ps. 7. 7 ff., 9. 8(7), 20(19), 82. 1, 96. 10, 13, 98. 9, 105. 7, Isa. 2. 4, 3. 13.

that the stars should be accorded this degree of personification. They are clearly represented here as divine beings.

The appearance of the term 'assembly' in the same context is significant. For in the Near East we find evidence for precisely this, an 'assembly' of the stars, conceived as divine powers. A fragmentary Ugaritic text gives in successive lines the phrases 'sons of El ... assembly of the stars ... celestial family'; the words for 'assembly' and 'family' are among those elsewhere used of the assembly of the gods. That this is more than a fortuitous collocation is strongly indicated by a verse in Job where 'the stars of the morning' stand in parallelism with 'the sons of Elohim'. Citing this passage, and another in the Song of Deborah where the stars are described as assisting in the battle against the Canaanite Sisra, E. T. Mullen writes that 'They constitute, in part, "the host of heaven" ... They form the assembly and act as allies and instruments of praise for Yahweh (cf. Isa 40: 26; Ps 148: 3), their creator and leader.'⁴⁷

In Akkadian we have several prayers addressed to the Gods of the Night, who are the great stars and constellations, those of the south and north, and those of the east and west. They are summoned to come in through the great gate of heaven and take their places.

Those of Anu, I have called you; those of Enlil, turn to me;
those of Ea, all of you, assemble before me.⁴⁸

These prayers seek the help of the Gods of the Night in averting evil from the person uttering them. Is it coincidence that the Watchman's lines about the assembly of astral potentates stand in a prayer to the gods to deliver him from the toils that beset him?

Interpreting the omen of eagles and hare that appeared at the beginning of the expedition, Calchas refers to the Achaean army as στόμιον μέγα Τροίας, 'Troy's great bit'. An oracular expression may be appropriate, yet it is a very singular metaphor, stranger than the 'bridle of Zeus' in the *Prometheus* which forced Inachus to a course of action contrary to his inclination and made him drive Io out from her home. The nearest parallel seems to be Isaiah's prophecy of Yahweh coming from afar

⁴⁷ Ag. 4-7; Housman in a manuscript annotation quoted by Fraenkel; KTU 1. 10 i 3-5 bn II. pfr kkbm ... dr dt šnm (Caquot-Szycer, 281); Job 38. 7, Jdg. 5. 20; Mullen, 194-6.

⁴⁸ A. L. Oppenheim, *Analecta Biblica* 12 (*Studia biblica et orientalia*, 3; Oriens antiquus), 1959, 284. 43 f. (Seux, 247); a selection of these prayers in Seux, 243-50, 375-7, 475-7; Foster, 575-8.

to winnow the nations with the winnowing-fan of vanity,
and <to put> a bridle that leads astray on the jaws of the peoples.⁴⁹

Images of divine power

We have already considered a part of the so-called hymn to Zeus that follows the account of Calchas' prophecy, but another part calls for comment here. The chorus contrast the invincible Zeus with previous kings of heaven who have been displaced:

The one who was formerly great,
bursting with fury and fight,
will not even be mentioned, he's past;
and he who came next, he has met
his match in the ring, and is gone:
but a man who will cry out the triumph of Zeus
will be hitting the bull's-eye of wisdom.

Again it is Isaiah who provides a parallel:

O Yahweh, our god, lords apart from you have ruled us,
(but) only with you do we praise your name.
Dead, they will not live; spirits, they will not arise.
To this end you have sought them out and exterminated them,
and destroyed all remembrance of them.⁵⁰

After hearing Clytaemestra's claim that the city of Priam has fallen, the chorus invoke Zeus and Night, who has thrown over the battlements of Troy such a net that neither large nor small can escape the meshes of a catch-all doom. A strikingly original image—or so one might suppose, had it not been a commonplace in the Near East since the third millennium that a god catches wrongdoers in his net. In the treaty between Eannatum of Lagash and the men of Umma (24th century) it is laid down that 'if they violate these provisions, the great Net will destroy them'. The accompanying stele relief shows the god Ningirsu with all his enemies confined in a net which he has drawn up and holds suspended. A court official at Mari in the Old Babylonian period reports in a letter that a prophet of the god Dagan has uttered a prophecy beginning 'O Babylon, why do you keep acting (thus)? I will gather you in the Net!' In *Etana*, when the treacherous eagle reveals its intention of eating the snake's young, one of its sons warns it not to:

⁴⁹ Ag. 133 [Aesch.] PV 672; Isa. 30. 28.
⁵⁰ Ag. 167–75; Isa. 26. 13 f.

'Do not eat (them), futher! The net of Shamash will catch [you]!'

And the snake, praying to Shamash after discovering its loss, says:

'Truly, Shamash, the broad earth is your net,
[the far] heaven is your snare.
Let the eagle not escape from your net!'

The great Hymn to Shamash too contains some lines about the god's net, from which the oath-breaker does not escape. In *Erra and Ishum* Erra, the god of war and destruction, is represented as having caught the inhabitants of Babylon in a net after decoying them like birds. Yahweh too deploys a net against nations or individuals who have offended him:

And Ephraim is like a dove, foolish, no understanding:
they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.
As they go, I will spread out my net over them,
like birds of heaven I will bring them down.⁵¹

The divine net cast over Troy must be seen against this traditional background.

It is immediately followed by a different image: that of Zeus Xenios who has long held his bow drawn and aimed at the transgressor Paris. Here again the Old Testament provides a parallel:

Unless he repents (Lxx you [pl.] repent), he (God) will whet his sword;
he has bent his bow and is fixing his aim.
He has made ready for him his instrument of death;
he is setting his arrows aflame.⁵²

In the next sentence the chorus observe that the Trojans can now speak (with knowledge and feeling) of 'the blow from Zeus' (Διὸς πλάγᾱ). The phrase recurs in Sophocles, who uses it of a supernatural affliction falling upon Ajax.⁵³ We have previously heard of people being struck by Zeus' scourge or goad (pp. 116, 556), but here we have a less concrete expression without specification of the instrument. Similarly in the Old Testament the verb *nākāh* 'strike' is often used of affliction or punishment sent by God, and the cognate noun *makkāh* is used of plague as a divine punishment.

⁵¹ Ag. 357–61; McCarthy, 16, with Kramer (1958), pl. 10; J. Bottéro, *ARM* 13. 42 f. no. 23. 8–10 (= *AEM* i/1. 439 no. 209); *Etana* II 46 f., 68–70, Hymn to Shamash 83–7 (*BWL* 130; Foster, 539 f.), *Erra* IV 19, cf. 94 (fine mesh); *CAD* s.vv. *šētu* and *šūškallu*; Hos. 7. 11 f., cf. Lam. 1. 13, Ezek. 12. 13, 17. 20, 32. 3, Hab. 1. 15–17.

⁵² Ag. 363; Ps. 7. 13(12) f., cf. 64. 8(7).

⁵³ Ag. 367; Soph. *Aj.* 137, cf. 278 f.

The chorus go on to condemn the folly of whoever thinks that the gods pay no regard to human affairs:

There is one who denies
that the gods deign to care about mortals
who step on the beauty tabooed; he is no pious man.

Again this is a reflection familiar to the Hebrew poets:

The wicked man, in his hauteur, does not seek (him):
'There is no God' is all his schemings ...
He says in his heart, 'God is oblivious,
he has hidden his face, he will never see' ...
Why does the wicked man scorn God?
He says in his heart, 'You (v.l. he) will not investigate.'

The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'.
They cause damage and abomination;
there is none that does good.

They deny Yahweh, and say 'Not he',
and 'No ill will befall us;
we shall not see sword or hunger.'⁵⁴

Zeus has sent punishment upon Troy; but of course its destruction was wrought by human hands. Agamemnon is to be hailed as its conqueror. There is not felt to be any problem in reconciling divine and human agency in the affair. The two are coordinated in various ways in the course of the play. We see one way in the opening speech of the Herald, when he speaks of Agamemnon as having dug Troy to the ground with the mattock of Zeus the justice-bringer. This notion of the king wielding the god's weapon as his agent can be illustrated from the Tukulti-Ninurta epic, where the Assyrian king inaugurates the battle by shooting an arrow, 'the weapon of Aššur'.⁵⁵ It is a constant presupposition of the royal inscriptions that the king and his army embody the power of Aššur. It makes good sense to consider their weapons as his.

Panegyric metaphor-strings

Clytaemestra celebrates Agamemnon not as the victorious general but as the mainstay of the household, happily restored after long absence. She does so with a remarkable agglomeration of metaphors:

⁵⁴ Ag. 369-72; Ps. 10. 4-13, 14. 1 = 53. 1, Jer. 5. 12.

⁵⁵ Ag. 525; *Tuk.-Nin.* v A 42' (quoted above, pp. 209 f.); cf. Machinist, 351, 426.

I would say that this man, watchdog of the steading,
the vessel's saving forestay, the high hall's
firm-grounded pillar, the father's only child,
is also land that sailors sight past hope,
a day most fair to see after a storm,
a flowing spring for a thirsty traveller.

In 1923 Adolf Erman published his famous anthology of Egyptian literature. It was not long before his Berlin colleague Wilamowitz, who had a high regard for Erman, read it and found there a text that reminded him so strongly of the *Agamemnon* passage that he included a note of it in his 'Lese Früchte'. It was a hymn to Sesostrius III, dating from the nineteenth century BC. In a more modern translation the passage reads as follows; each predication is preceded by the repeating formula 'How great is the lord of his city'.

... he is a canal that restrains the river's flood water!
... he is a cool room that lets a man sleep till dawn!
... he is a walled rampart of copper of Sinai!
... he is a shelter whose hold does not fail!
... he is a fort that shields the timid from his foe!
... he is an overflowing shade, cool in summertime!
... he is a warm corner, dry in wintertime!
... he is a mountain that blocks the storm when the sky rages!

The praising of the king as a cool shade in summer and a warm corner in winter is paralleled more closely in a subsequent speech of Clytaemestra's (966-72).

Wilamowitz did not draw any particular conclusion from the comparison, but hinted that such 'Überschwenglichkeiten' were uncharacteristic of Greek and used here only to suggest the exaggerations of a hypocrite. Walther Kranz, in a book dedicated to Wilamowitz's *Manes*, went further and claimed that Aeschylus was acquainted with specific Egyptian hymns; he pointed out that Agamemnon in his reply to Clytaemestra's flatteries criticizes her for behaving like a barbarian (919). However, examples of the style in question can be found in other oriental literatures too. In a Sumerian composition of the Old Babylonian period, known also in Akkadian and Hittite versions, one Lugalirra is represented as sending salutations to his mother Shat-Ishtar and reciting to the messenger the signs by which he will identify her. Here is an excerpt from a long series of predications:

My mother is rain in season, the first watering of the seed,
an abundant harvest, a ripening of grain,

a garden of desire, full of delights,
a well-watered place adorned with cones,
a fruit of springtime, the produce of (the month) Nisan,
a runnel that brings the waters of growth to the vegetable-plot.

In Hebrew we find, for instance,

Lo, a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule in justice.
And each one will be as a shelter from the wind,
and a refuge from the storm,
like runnels of water in an arid place,
like the shade of a great rock in a tiring country.⁵⁶

We must conclude that Aeschylus makes Clytaemestra adopt a style typical of oriental (not specifically Egyptian) royal panegyric.

Further metaphors

Certain of the metaphors that she uses have further individual parallels. When she says that Agamemnon is 'a flowing spring for a thirsty traveller', besides the references to runnels of water in the passages just quoted, we may recall the biblical proverb

Cool water to a weary throat, and (= is) good news from a distant land.

And when in the later speech she likens him to a tree or vine that gives shade to the house, she is using an image that Babylonian and Assyrian kings had long used of themselves. Hammurabi called himself 'the shade-canopy of the land', and similar titles, 'shade of the world-quarters', 'shade of his army', 'establisher of pleasant shade over the people', were employed by Assurnasirpal, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon. The king's subjects spoke of being 'in the shade (= protection) of my lord'.⁵⁷

In the prophetic language of Cassandra, Agamemnon is a lion, while Clytaemestra is an amphisbaena or Scylla; Orestes in the *Choephoroi* twice calls her a viper. Sumerian and Assyrian kings had called them-

⁵⁶ Ag. 896-901; Lichtheim, i. 199 f.; Wilamowitz, *Hermes* 62, 1927, 287 f. = *Kl. Schr.* iv. 442 f., cf. Fraenkel on Ag. 899-902 (p. 410); W. Kranz (as n. 1), 101 f., 294; Hall, 206; J. Nougayrol and E. Laroche in *Ugaritica* v, 310-19 and 773-9; Isa. 32. 1 f.; cf. 4 Ezra 12. 42, 'For of all the prophets thou only art left us, as a cluster of the vintage, and as a lamp in a dark place, and as a haven or ship preserved from the tempest.'

⁵⁷ Ag. 901, 966-72; Prov. 25. 25; Law-code of Hammurabi ii 48, *RIMA* ii. 225. 19, 276. 13, *KAH* ii 122. 22, 124. 7 f., Borger, 35 § 23. 3; cf. M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes royales* (as ch. 3, n. 133), 266; *AHW* s. vv. *šulu* I A 4, B 3, 7 and *šulūlu* 3b. Cf. also the Sesostri hymn quoted above, and the Arabian poem cited from Goethe by Fraenkel (p. 440) following Schniedewin.

selves lions, but for the lion and snake images together we can cite the so-called testament of the early Hittite king Hattusili I (c. 1600), recorded in both Akkadian and Hittite. Addressing his council, Hattusili recalls that he had designated his nephew as his successor, but the young man had shown him no affection. 'The word of the king he did not accept, the word of his mother, the snake, he has accepted.' He declares that he has now adopted Mursili as his son and successor. 'In place of the lion the god] will [put in place (another) li]on.'⁵⁸

In their despair following the murder of Agamemnon, the chorus wish for some painless stroke of fate to bring them 'the eternal, endless sleep' (τὸν αἰεὶ ... ἀτέλευτον ὕπνον). 'Sleep' as a metaphor for death is found once or twice in Homer, but this particular expression, 'the eternal sleep', appears to be new in Greek. It has a close parallel in Jeremiah: 'And they will sleep the sleep of eternity'.⁵⁹

Anticipating a further chapter in the tale of bloodshed, the old men sing that Fate is sharpening harm(?) for Justice on other whetstones. The text is not certain, and some critics have endeavoured to introduce explicit mention of the sword or other weapon that is certainly implied. In a parallel passage in the *Choephoroi* Aeschylus speaks of 'Aisa the sword-maker' being engaged in preparatory forging. The imagery is strongly reminiscent of Hebrew poetry:

Thus says Yahweh:

'A sword, a sword has been sharpened, and also burnished:
for making slaughter it has been sharpened,
for showing lightning it has been burnished.'

Unless he repents (Lxx you [pl.] repent), he (God) will whet his sword.⁶⁰

CHOEPHOROI

The play opens with Orestes' invocation of Hermes *khthonios*, the god who mediates between the upper and lower worlds. Electra makes a similar invocation as she pours libations on her father's tumulus, and she addresses Hermes as κήρυξ μέγιστε τῶν ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω, 'greatest herald of those above and below'. The title may perhaps be modelled on

⁵⁸ Ag. 1259, 1233, *Cho.* 249, 994, cf. 1047; Engnell, 186; F. Sommer and A. Falkenstein, *Die hethitisch-akkadische Bilingue des Hattusili I (Labarna II)* (*Abh. Bayer. Akad.*, Phil.-hist. Abt., N.F. 16), Munich 1938, 2-7 ii 9 f., 20, 39, trs. in Gurney (1952), 171, and *CAH* ii(1). 247.

⁵⁹ Ag. 1450 f., cf. *Soph. O.C.* 1578; *Il.* 11. 241, 14. 482; *Jer.* 51. 39 = 57.

⁶⁰ Ag. 1536, *Cho.* 647 f.; *Ezek.* 21. 14(9) f., *Ps.* 7. 13. For Yahweh's sword cf. *Isa.* 34. 5 f.

a formulaic predicate of Shamash in Akkadian prayers, where he is called *bēl* or *dayyān* or *muštēšir elāti u šaplāti*, 'lord/judge/setter to rights of those above and below'.⁶¹

Electra then calls upon the dead Agamemnon, and, according to a plausible emendation, asks him to kindle Orestes as a light in the house. The metaphor by which someone may become a light (of salvation) is already Homeric, and we have considered it elsewhere (p. 253). With this particular passage where Orestes is to be the light of his father's house we may compare a fragmentary text in praise of Assurbanipal following his conquest of Elam: the king is called 'the Sun of the lands, the Light of his father's house'.⁶²

In the last chapter (p. 519) we took note of the motif that someone in danger prays to a god 'let me live to sing thy praises'. The same basic idea may be expressed as a warning to the deity that he will lose a worshipper if the suppliant is allowed to die. Orestes puts this to Zeus:

And if you destroy these fledglings of a father
who sacrificed and did you special honour,
how then will you be fêted as you were? ...
If all this royal stem is withered up,
it won't supply your altars on the days
of bovine sacrifice.

Psalmists use similar arguments:

Turn, O Yahweh, rescue my life,
deliver me for the sake of (my) devotion to thee.
For in death there is no remembrance of thee:
in Sheol who will praise thee?

What profit (is there) in my blood, in my going down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise thee, will it tell of thy constancy?

The Hittite king Mursili, in his desperate prayers for the relief of his land from pestilence, appeals to the gods not to kill off the few who are still left to offer sacrificial loaves and libations. In a fragment of a Hurro-Hittite mythical narrative the wise and philanthropic god Ea asks his fellow deities:

'Why are you destroying [mankind]? They will not give sacrifices [to the god]s; they will no[t burn] incense to you. If you destroy mankind, they will no longer worship] the gods. No one will offer [bread] or libations to you any more.'⁶³

The origins of the theme go back at least to Old Babylonian times, for the gods of *Atrahasis* had made the painful discovery that the destruction of mankind had just that effect. One Apil-Adad asked his god in a letter, 'Why have you become indifferent? Who could give you someone (else) like me?'⁶⁴

In the course of the great Kommos the women of the chorus declare that it is a traditional 'law' that blood shed upon the ground 'asks for' further blood; carnage shouts for an avenging spirit from the prior dead to bring new harm on top of the old. Elsewhere Aeschylus has spoken of the murder victim's blood being 'drunk' by the earth (cf. above, p. 236). We find both ideas together—the drinking of the blood by the earth, and the blood's vocal demand for justice—in the biblical story of Cain and Abel. When Cain kills his brother and then denies knowledge of his whereabouts, Yahweh says

'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the soil. And now you are accursed from the soil which has opened up its mouth to take your brother's blood from your hand.'⁶⁵

At the end of the Kommos Orestes and Electra, supported by the chorus, call upon their dead father, to whom libations have previously been poured, to come up to the light and assist them against their enemies. Prayers are also addressed to Earth and Persephone to release him. The whole passage has a ritualistic air. It belongs in the same sphere as the raising of the ghost of Darius in the *Persai* (above, p. 550), though on this occasion Aeschylus does not want the ghost actually to appear, and it is not the dead king's counsel that is sought but his active help in the struggle. The proceedings recall the Mesopotamian 'ghost assistance prescriptions', rituals in which the good family ghosts (those of the parents, grandparents, etc.) are invoked, with offerings and incantations, to give assistance against an evil that threatens.⁶⁶

⁶³ Cho. 256–61; Ps. 6. 5(4) f., 30. 10(9), cf. 88. 11(10) f., Isa. 38. 17–19; KUB xiv. 8 and duplicates (CTH 378; ANET 395 f.) § 9, 11; *Song of Hedammu* fr. 6 Siegelová (Hoffner, 49 § 6. 1).

⁶⁴ M. Stol, *Letters from Yale* (Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung, 9), Leiden 1981, no. 141.

⁶⁵ Cho. 400–2; *ibid.* 66, Sept. 735 f.; Gen. 4. 10 f., compared in T. W. Peile's commentary (1840) and by Burkert (1992), 187 f.; cf. Num. 35. 33; Robertson Smith, 417 n. 5, 428.

⁶⁶ Cho. 456–509; J. A. Scurlock, *Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Diss. Chicago 1988; Tropper, 103–7. Part of one of these incantations is quoted below, p. 578.

⁶¹ Cho. 165 (transposed after 123); Seux, 365, 394, 411, 423, 424; Foster, 647, 650, 652, 668.

⁶² Cho. 131; CPLM no. 22 rev. 14. The Sumerograms for 'sun' and 'light' are preceded by the divine determinative.

The next stasimon begins with a meditation on human wickedness, especially that perpetrated by women in love. It is presented as an outstanding phenomenon in a world that contains many formidable things:

Many are the fearful and grievous things
that the earth nurtures; the sea's arms too
teem with contrary beasts.

The lines recall the 104th Psalm, especially as there too we find the unusual image of the sea having arms, which presumably enfold the creatures of the deep:

How great are thy works, Yahweh:
all of them thou hast done with skill.
The earth is full of thy creation.
Here is the sea, great and wide-armed,
teeming with creatures innumerable,
living things small and great.⁶⁷

This psalm shows various similarities to the great hymn to the Aten from Amarna (Lichtheim, ii. 96–9), and the verses in question seem to echo a passage in the fourteenth-century Egyptian hymn: 'How many are your deeds, though hidden from sight, O Sole God beside whom there is none! You made the earth as you wished, you alone, all peoples, herds, and flocks', etc. This is more remote from Aeschylus, but it serves to indicate that the Hebrew song stands in a wider tradition. We should not necessarily think in terms of direct Egyptian influence on Israel and Judah. It may have gone by way of Phoenicia.

The chorus continues with a reference to the dangerous 'torches' or 'lamps' (λαμπάδες) that fly between heaven and earth. Aeschylus is probably thinking of meteors—perhaps also of comets—which may be portents of ill. But I take the opportunity of noting that from the beginning of the fifth century λαμπάς appears in Greek poetry as a metaphor for the sun; Euripides uses the expression 'the oncoming λαμπάς of the god' for 'tomorrow morning'. Similarly in Ugaritic poetry we find the sun called 'the lamp (nrt) of the gods', and the moon 'the lamp (nyr) of the heavens'. In Akkadian Shamash is called a 'torch', and Ishtar in her aspect as Evening Star is the 'torch of the gods' or 'torch of heaven and earth'.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Cho. 585–9, Ps. 104. 24 f.

⁶⁸ Cho. 590, Parmenides DK 28 B 10. 3, Soph. Ant. 879, Eur. Med. 352; KTU 1. 4 viii 21, al.; 24. 16, 31; CAD s.v. dipāru (b).

When Clytaemestra, cornered by Orestes, exposes her breast and pleads with him to spare the life that fostered his, Orestes is disconcerted, and turns to Pylades for advice. Pylades reminds him of Apollo's oracle: he must kill her. Orestes wavers no more. The motif of the plea for life which the hero's friend persuades him to reject seems to have been established before Aeschylus; it is paralleled both in Homer and in the Gilgamesh tradition, as was shown in an earlier chapter.⁶⁹

The chorus hail the assassination of Clytaemestra and her lover as a liberation. 'Here is light to behold', they cry, reminding us of Isaiah:

The people that walk in darkness have seen a great light;
the dwellers in Erebus (*ereš šalmāwet*), a light shines upon them.⁷⁰

'They go on:

Up now, O house! Too long you lay prostrate.
Soon in full power the prince will cross
the mansion's threshold.

'Prince' (πρόμος) is a probable emendation for the nonsensical 'time' (χρόνος) given by the manuscript, which is an accidental repetition from two lines before. The reference is to Orestes, who has taken Clytaemestra into the palace to kill her and will shortly come out again. Here we may recall the psalmist:

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, you ancient portals,
and the king of glory will come (in).⁷¹

EUMENIDES

The parodos of the *Eumenides* takes an unusual form: not the entry of the chorus from outside but their waking from sleep. They are roused by Clytaemestra's ghost, who reminds them that

You have lapped up much from my stores:
wineless libations, sober appeasements,
and holy night-dinners at the fire-hearth
I have offered you—an hour shared with no other god.

The reminder of past offerings is a typical element in Greek literary prayers, with ancient antecedents in the Near East, as we have seen

⁶⁹ Cho. 896–903; above, p. 216.

⁷⁰ Cho. 961; Isa. 9. 1(2).

⁷¹ Cho. 963–6; Ps. 24. 7.

elsewhere (pp. 273 f.). I may quote here another example in which the powers addressed are of the nether world. It is an Akkadian invocation of family ghosts for help in trouble, of the sort mentioned above in connection with Orestes' and Electra's invocation of Agamemnon. It begins:

You, ghosts of my family, makers of battle,
of my father, my father's father, my mother, my mother's mother, my
brother, my sister,
of my family, my kith and my kin, as many as are sleeping in the earth:
I have made you offerings such as are made for the dead,
I have libated water for you, I have tended you,
I have magnified you, I have honoured you.

This is immediately followed by the demand for help.⁷²

Arriving at Athens in pursuit of Orestes, the Erinyes sing that he cannot hope for absolution from Athena, because his mother's blood, shed on the earth, cannot readily be fetched up again: 'liquid poured on the ground is gone'. This is a particularly explicit statement of an idea that appears several times in Aeschylus, especially in the *Orestes*, namely that the blood of someone who is killed is drunk up by the earth and cannot be recovered. There seem to be two components in this doctrine: the notion of the earth being indelibly stained by bloodshed, a crime not to be ignored or forgotten, and the notion of the irreversibility of death. The second component is illustrated by what the woman of Tekoa said to David: 'For we certainly die, like waters shed on the earth, which will not be collected up again.'⁷³

In the next stasimon the Erinyes describe how they leap upon their blood-guilty victim and bring him down,

and as he falls he does not know it, from witless blight:
so dark a cloud of pollution drifts about the man.

The idea of the sinner's ignorance of his own predicament is paralleled in the great Hymn to Shamash. The Middle Babylonian poet writes that the perjurer cannot avoid Shamash's wide net, while as for the man who raises his eyes towards his friend's wife, the god's weapon goes straight for him, there is no one to defend him, and 'he is caught in a bronze snare and does not know it'.⁷⁴

⁷² *Eum.* 106 ff.; Ebeling (1931), 131.

⁷³ *Eum.* 261-3, cf. 647 f., *Sept.* 735 f., *Ag.* 1018-21, *Cho.* 48, 66 f.; 2 *Sam.* 14. 14. Cf. above on *Cho.* 400-2.

⁷⁴ *Eum.* 377; Hymn to Shamash 94 (*BWL* 130; Foster, 540).

In another chorus the miscreant is portrayed as suffering a metaphorical shipwreck. In the midst of the storm he calls upon the gods, who do not listen,

and the deity laughs at the hothead,
seeing the one who never reckoned so
in helpless plight, failing to round the headland.

The motif of divine *Schadenfreude* expressed in laughter may be illustrated from the Hebrew Psalms:

The wicked plots against the righteous,
and gnashes his teeth at him;
Adonai laughs at him, for he sees that his day is coming.⁷⁵

Towards the end of the play, after they have been persuaded to become friends and residents of Attica, the Erinyes sing of the people's being 'under Pallas' wings', meaning under her protection. The expression has parallels in later tragedy, and—once more—in the Psalms:

In the shadow of your wings you will hide me.
In the shadow of your wings I will seek refuge.
With his pinions he will protect you,
and beneath his wings you will seek refuge.⁷⁶

PROMETHEUS

Finally we will consider a few passages from *Prometheus Vincitus*, a play transmitted under Aeschylus' name but composed some twenty years after his death, probably by his son Euphorion.

One of the most striking poetic passages in the whole play occurs in the prologue, when Hephaestus, shackling Prometheus to the rock, tells him that there he will see no human form and hear no human voice; by day he will be scorched by the sun, by night he will be chilled by the frost. Night is embellished with the epithet ποικιλείμων, 'of variegated (patterned, embroidered) dress', the dark sky with its patterns of stars being thought of as a garment in which the goddess Night is clothed. A similar association is suggested by the star-spangled robes that

⁷⁵ *Eum.* 560; *Ps.* 37. 12 f., cf. 2. 4, 59. 8.

⁷⁶ *Eum.* 1001, cf. *Eur. Hcl.* 10, *Andr.* 441, *H.F.* 71; *Ps.* 17. 8, 57. 2(1), 91. 4, all cited by P. Groeneboom ad loc. (*Aeschylus' Eumenides*, Groningen 1952, 229 n. 1).

Babylonian deities often wear in representations of the ninth to seventh centuries, and by the word *hurimū* or *burumū* used in literature of the period for the starry sky. It is derived from the root of the verb *barāmu* 'to be variegated', which is used in the D stem (*burumu*) to mean 'combine colours' in fabrics or otherwise; hence also *birmu* 'multi-coloured trim' used to adorn garments. Thus it corresponds closely to the Greek ποικίλμα, which Euripides and Critias use of the starry heaven.⁷⁷

Once left alone, Prometheus calls upon the sky, the swift-winged winds, the rivers, the sea, the earth, and the sun to witness his mistreatment. There is a second such appeal at the very end of the play. We saw in chapter 1 (pp. 20 f.) that it was common in the Near East to call upon the surrounding cosmic elements as witnesses to treaties. But the present passage, where there is no reference to a treaty, has a closer parallel in Jeremiah:

'Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be horrified, shudder greatly'—
(such is) the utterance of Yahweh—
'for two evils my people has committed.'⁷⁸

The epithet that Prometheus applies to the winds in these lines, ταχύπτεροι 'swift-winged', introduces the idea of the winds as winged beings. This is familiar in Attic vase-painters' representations of Boreas pursuing Oreithyia, but seldom alluded to in Greek poetry. Yahweh, however, rides 'on the wings of the wind', and in the Akkadian *Adapa* the hero is described as breaking the wing of the South Wind.⁷⁹

Prometheus' first visitor is the god Oceanus, who, strangely, comes riding on a griffin. The Greek word for griffin, *grūps*, may be related to the Hebrew *k'arab* 'cherub'; the modification of the foreign *krūb* to *grūp* may have been due to the analogy of *gūps* 'vulture' and/or *grūpós* 'hook-nosed'. According to Ezekiel, the cherubim are winged creatures with calves' feet and the faces of a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a man, or in another passage just two faces, of a lion and a man. The griffin is a winged lion with an eagle's head. The physiologies are not identical, but it is very credible that the Greeks should have taken over the Semitic name of a composite winged animal in association with the artistic motif of the griffin. What interests us in the present context is that the cherub,

⁷⁷ PV 24, cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1096, Critias *TrGF* 43 F 19. 34; R. Eisler, *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt*, Munich 1910, 60 f., 92; Albright, 175 = repr. 201.

⁷⁸ PV 88–92, 1091–3, cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 601; Jer. 2. 12 f., cf. Isa. 1. 2; Brown, 270 f.

⁷⁹ PV 88; Ps. 18. 11(10), 104. 3, compared by Brown, 272; *Adapa* B 5–12 etc. In *Anzu* Ninurta defeats the Storm-bird by cutting off his wings.

like the griffin here, may serve as a divine mount: Yahweh rides on one in his epiphany as storm-god.⁸⁰

Prometheus as bringer of civilization

The figure of Prometheus in this play differs considerably from the Prometheus of Hesiod. Not only is he the god who brought fire to mankind; he has become their champion and protector in general. He has been responsible for all kinds of improvement in human life. He taught men arts and crafts, the use of bricks and timber, astronomy, arithmetic, writing, domestication of animals, sailing, medicine, divination, mining; and when Zeus planned to destroy the human race, it was Prometheus who saved them.

This last allusion may be to the story of the Flood, in which Prometheus played a crucial role as warner and adviser of Deucalion, the man who was to survive with his wife and re-found the human race. As we saw in chapter 9 (pp. 489–93), the Flood myth comes from the Semitic Near East, and Prometheus' part in it corresponds to that of Inki/Ea in the Mesopotamian accounts. Stephanie West, following the lead of Jacqueline Duchemin, has pointed out that the new 'culture hero' aspect of Prometheus can be explained in the same way, as a reflex of Inki/Ea's role in Sumerian and Babylonian mythology as patron of the arts of civilization. She suggests that this assimilation of Prometheus to Ea may not have been original to the dramatist but already present, together with the Flood story, in the narrative of the epic *Titanomachy*. Rather than repeat the substance of her article, I refer the reader to it.⁸¹

In telling the tale of his benefits to humankind, Prometheus says that formerly they lived in sunless caves like ants. The idea that humans initially lived like animals in the wild appears as a standard feature of accounts of the development of civilization from the second half of the fifth century. These are usually regarded as echoing sophistic speculation, or more specifically that of Protagoras. There is, however, evidence for such a conception of primitive man in much earlier Sumerian and Babylonian tradition. It is, after all, the logical corollary of the idea that mankind received the arts of culture from a god.

⁸⁰ PV 284; Ezek. 1. 5–11, 9. 3, 10. 1–22, 41. 18 f.; Ps. 18. 11(10) = 2 Sam. 22. 11; cf. O. Eissfeldt, *CAH* ii(2). 600 f. Strabo 8. 3. 12 mentions an archaic(?) painting of Artemis riding on a griffin. Cf. Brown, 85–7, who points out another function which cherubim and griffins have in common, that of denying access to something very desirable: paradise (Gen. 3. 24, cf. Ezek. 28. 13–16) or gold (Hdt. 4. 13).

⁸¹ PV 442–506, 231–6; J. Duchemin, *Prométhée. Histoire du mythe de ses origines orientales à ses incarnations modernes*, Paris 1974, 33–67, and *REG* 92, 1979, 35, and *RHR* 197, 1980, 33, 43 (= *her Mythes grecs et sources orientales*, 213, 177, 185); S. R. West, *Mus. Helv.* 51, 1994, 129–49.

According to a Sumerian poem known as *Lahar and Ashnan* or *The Dispute between Cattle and Grain*,

Mankind of that time
knew not the eating of bread,
knew not the wearing of garments;
the people went around with skins on their bodies.
They ate grass with their mouths like sheep,
drank water from ditches.

Enkidu in the Gilgamesh epic is portrayed as a 'primitive' (*hullā*), a shaggy brute who lived among the animals and in animal fashion, until the prostitute set him on the road to civilization. Berossus in his account of Babylonian antiquities provides evidence that the concept of the primitive, beast-like life was connected in Babylonian tradition with the myth of the culture hero. He relates that the people were numerous but lived in an unstructured way like animals, until the appearance of the fish-bodied sage Oannes, who taught them writing, crafts, urbanization, law, geometry, agriculture, and so forth.⁸² If Prometheus' role as the giver of a similar series of attainments to mankind was inspired by Enkidu's role in Mesopotamian myth, it seems likely that the associated picture of the primitive life had its origins in the same source.

Another detail from the same speech of Prometheus may be noticed. He claims to have invented writing for mankind's benefit, 'the remembrance of all things, the Muse-mother maid of work'. The poet is alluding to the Hesiodic and Solonian tradition that Memory (*Mnemosyne*) was the mother of the Muses. At the same time he is investing this mythical affiliation with a more specific meaning; he is saying that the art of writing, which can record anything, is the mother of literature. We find a very similar pronouncement in the Mesopotamian bilingual proverb tradition (only the Sumerian version is preserved):

The scribal art is the mother of orators and the father of scholars.⁸³

Prometheus' punishment

At the end of the play Hermes warns Prometheus that if he does not repent, Zeus will smash with thunder and lightning the rock to which he

is bound, and he will find himself imprisoned inside it. After a long interval he will return to the light, but then he will suffer the torment of daily laceration by Zeus' eagle. Prometheus remains defiant; he challenges Zeus to hurl his thunderbolt and convulse the world about him. 'Let the wind shake the earth from its bases (*ἐκ πυθμένων*), roots and all!'

The eagle torment is a traditional element in the myth, already mentioned by Hesiod, but the cosmic cataclysm and the period of enclosure within the rock are new and surprising, with no obvious rationale in the Greek context. Are they simply products of this eccentric poet's baroque imagination? A passage preserved in Isaiah suggests otherwise: that they have a basis in Near Eastern apocalyptic prophecy.

For the windows from on high will be open,
and the foundations of the earth will quake;
the earth will be utterly broken up, shaken about, tottering ...
And it shall be on that day that Yahweh will punish
the host of the heights in the heights
and the kings of the earth on the earth:
they will be gathered to imprisonment down into a cistern
and shut up in a dungeon,
and after a multitude of days they will be punished.⁸⁴

Apart from the fact that Prometheus' fate too is conveyed in the form of a threatening prophecy, there are four points of correspondence between it and the biblical passage.

1. Isaiah describes action to be taken by Yahweh not just against human kings but also against the host of heaven, that is, the lesser divinities who have failed to subordinate themselves to his will.

2. He will use his storm weapons to break up the earth, causing its foundations (*mōs' dīm*) to quake.

3. The miscreants will be confined in a *bôr*, that is, a subterranean cistern with a narrow mouth, excavated from rocky soil, convenient for use as a temporary prison.

4. After a long interval they will be brought out and subjected to (unspecified) punishment.

These last two items reflect what a king might do with his enemies in real life, and against this background Prometheus' strange period of entombment finally makes sense.

⁸² PV 452 f., cf. *Hymn. Hom.* 20, 4, *Soph. Ant.* 356-9, *Eur. Supp.* 202, *Hippocr. VM3*, 6, *Critias TrGF* 43 F 19, 2, *Moschion TrGF* 97 F 6, 4, *Lahar and Ashnan* 19-24 as translated in Tigay, 203 (cf. Bottéro-Kramer, 512, according to whose rendering those early people did not even wear skins but 'ils allaient et venaient tout nus'); *Gilg.* I ii 35-41, etc.; *Berossus FGrHist* 680 F 1 § 3 f.

⁸³ PV 460 f.; *BWL* 259 19 = Foster, 345. I quote Lambert's translation; Foster renders 'The scribal art is mother of the eloquent and father of the erudite'.

⁸⁴ PV 1014-25, 1046 f.; *Isa.* 24, 18-22 (considered to be post-exilic).

The cosmic cataclysm is also at home in Near Eastern accounts of God's fury, as we have seen in connection with Hesiod's theomachy (p. 296). The tragedian's reference to the earth's bases and roots echoes Hesiod, who had spoken of the 'roots' of earth and sea, the foundations (θέμεθλα) of Oceanus, and the base (πυθμήν) of the sea. These are all vague terms, and it is impossible to determine how Hesiod or the poet of the *Prometheus* imagined the earth's bases or foundations. But it is to be noted that 'the foundations of the earth', *môš'dê 'éres*, is a recurrent formula in the Hebrew poets. In the Book of Proverbs Yahweh is said to have carved or marked them out (*hqq*) when he created the world. In Akkadian the word *kigallu* (from Sumerian *ki-gal* 'great earth') is used of the foundations of a building or the pedestal of a statue, and also of the underworld.⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

It is curious that the author of the *Prometheus* should still present us with such striking orientalisms when his contemporaries Sophocles and Euripides do not. In general the middle of the fifth century marks the terminal date. The explanation may be that the *Prometheus* poet, who was something of a polymath, well versed in contemporary and older literature,⁸⁶ derived significant portions of his Prometheus mythology from a lost epic of somewhat earlier date, the *Titanomachy*. If this is true of Prometheus as saviour of mankind from the Flood and as imparter of the arts of civilization, it might apply also to the prophecy of his imprisonment in a rocky chamber following a thunderbolt assault which will shake the earth's foundations. And in a poem which contained references to the Sun's four-horse team and his floating basin, Kronos' metamorphosis into a horse to engender the centaur Chiron, and Zeus dancing a jig after the defeat of the Titans, we cannot say that the prevailing standards of dignity and decency would be violated if some god—Zeus again?—appeared riding on a griffin. That would account for all of the orientalisms noted from the *Prometheus* except the detail of Night's embroidered robe, which might well have been anticipated by some earlier tragedian such as Aeschylus.

Our collection of comparative material is now concluded. I trust that the reader, even if not convinced by every one of the parallels that have been adduced, will by now be persuaded of the general thesis that Greek poetry from Hesiod and Homer down to Pindar and Aeschylus is pervaded by influences from West Asiatic literature and religious thought, and that this was not the consequence of a single, focussed burst of radiation but reflects an ongoing process over a broad front. It remains to ask what were the channels by which we may imagine these influences to have percolated.

⁸⁵ Hes. *Th.* 728, 816, 932; *Mic.* 6. 2, *Isa.* 40. 21, *Jer.* 31. 37, *Ps.* 18. 16(15), 82. 5, *Prov.* 8. 29; Tallqvist (1934), 3–6.

⁸⁶ Cf. M. L. West, *JHS* 99, 1979, 147. To the authors listed there as influences on the poet add Acusilaus (*FGrHist* 2 F 34, Hesione as Prometheus' wife = *PV* 559) and perhaps the Cyclic *Titanomachy* (see above).

We have seen that the Greek poets of the Archaic age were profoundly indebted to western Asia at many levels. They were indebted for mythical and literary motifs, cosmological and theological conceptions, formal procedures, technical devices, figures of speech, even phraseology and idioms. The debts continued to mount between the seventh century and the fifth.

Clearly there is no prospect of accounting for them by reference to any narrowly defined factor such as, for example, eighth-century Greek patronage of north Syrian marts, or the occasional arrival in Greece of a poet or seer from abroad. Actually, there is no prospect of accounting for them at all in any decisive or final way. We shall never have the evidence that would enable us to pin down the exact moments at which and processes by which eastern influences became operative. But we can at least reflect on some of the more obvious possibilities and aspects of the problem.

Taking our bearings

Let us begin by trying to establish some spatio-temporal parameters. Can we identify particular times at which oriental influences ran, and particular countries from which they proceeded?

There is some likelihood that Mycenaean Greece was already being affected by eastern currents in respect of poetry and myth, as it palpably was in respect of art and material culture. The archaeological record suggests that intercourse between Greece and the East was most intense between 1450 and 1200, not reaching a similar level again until the eighth and seventh centuries. We may reasonably suppose that those were also the two most significant periods for 'literary' convergence. Contacts did not lapse entirely in the intervening centuries, and oriental influence may have been continuous. But we shall want to keep those two periods primarily in mind.

It is difficult in principle to estimate the extent of the orientalizing tendency in the earlier period, mainly because we have no Mycenaean poetry (except perhaps for a small handful of lines and half-lines recoverable from Homer), but also because it is easier to prove that something is late than that it is early. Certainly some things are late. Hesiod's *Myth of Ages*, for instance, cannot go back to the Bronze Age,

seeing that iron has an integral place in it. His 'call' by the Muses as he lends his sheep, like the tenor of his preaching in the *Works and Days*, alligns him with the slightly older Amos (p. 307). The motif that a poem is imparted to the poet in an encounter with a god or goddess, as the *Theogony* is imparted to Hesiod by the Muses, has Babylonian parallels, but again they are only of the eighth century, or at any rate of the first millennium (p. 287). Certain motifs in the *Iliad* seem to reflect Assyrian court literature of the early seventh century.¹

Mesopotamia is clearly of outstanding importance as a source of much of the material under discussion. Not that everything which I have documented from Akkadian or Sumerian texts necessarily came to Greece from there. In many cases I was able to cite supporting evidence from Anatolia, Syria, or Palestine. The sheer quantity of surviving cuneiform literature makes it inevitable that some things are attested there alone which were actually not specifically Mesopotamian and might have been equally well attested in Aramaic or Phoenician literature if we had an equivalent body of texts. However, in some instances the material has a definitely Babylonian character. The hemerology of the Hesiodic *Days* and the augural and astronomical lore contained in other, lost Hesiodic poems point in this direction. Both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* show, beyond all reasonable question, the influence of the Gilgamesh epic, and more especially of the Standard Babylonian version of that poem, including the supposititious Tablet XII. This is the version known from Assurbanipal's library at Nineveh, and the attachment of Tablet XII may perhaps have been peculiar to the Neo-Assyrian tradition. Other things in the *Iliad*, as just mentioned, appear to point even more specifically towards Assyrian court literature of the reigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, and raise the possibility of some unusually direct line of communication linking that milieu with the *Iliad* poet's. This would incidentally provide a convenient channel for knowledge of the Gilgamesh epic, and perhaps of other Akkadian poems, to reach the West. No doubt Mesopotamian influences percolated at many other times and by many other routes, but it is exciting to scent a particular one. We shall return to it later.

Apart from the Mesopotamian material, we have encountered a remarkable number of parallels to early Greek literature in the Old Testament, especially in the semi-legendary accounts of eleventh- and tenth-century 'history' and in the poetry of the Psalms and the Prophets. Again, the fact that we happen to have a relatively large corpus of Hebrew writing makes it a disproportionately clamorous source. In the

¹ See the notes in chapter 7 on *Il.* 11. 531-7 and 12. 1-33, pp. 375-80.

ancient Near Eastern universe Israel and Judah are something of a backwater; they never had direct relations with the Aegean. But, leaving aside the national cult of Yahweh, whose claim to exclusivity was not fully realized for many centuries, Hebrew culture had much in common with Phoenician, both being heirs to the Canaanite culture of the late Bronze Age.² If we came into possession of a corpus of Phoenician literature comparable in size and scope to the Old Testament, containing legends of origins, historical sagas, wisdom texts, hymns and psalms, and poetic discourses of the prophets of Baal or Eshmun, we should probably find that a high proportion of the motifs, similes, and idioms which we have noted from the Hebrew books were equally current in the Phoenician kingdoms. Stories known to us in connection with Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Saul, and David might well reappear attached to forgotten heroes of the north. The significance of the biblical material, then, is that it is likely to reflect wider Levantine traditions.

Greek contacts with the Syrian coastland are well attested, and it has always been assumed that the Phoenicians played a leading (if not exclusive) role in the emission or transmission of oriental influence towards Greece. Some things seem native to Syria rather than Mesopotamia, such as the concept of the gods' mountain of convocation in the north (p. 112). The myth of the Pillars of Heracles, first attested in the fifth century, seems to reflect a specifically Phoenician cult property, though one located far from the homeland (p. 464). This is a reminder that contacts between Greeks and orientals did not have to take place in the orient. The myths of Kadmos and Harmonia at Thebes, I have suggested, owe their origin to ninth- or eighth-century Phoenician residents there.

Semitic linguistic influence, postulated in this instance, is attested by many loan words in Greek, some of which go back to the Mycenaean age (pp. 12-14). We have met it in another form in the language of Greek poets, where a typically Semitic phrase is translated literally into Greek, as in the Homeric 'sons of the Achaeans', 'the heavy hands of plague', and so forth (chapter 5), or the novel Pindaric and tragic expressions using ἀνάξ and ἀνάσσω (pp. 545 f.). Such calques imply considerable familiarity with Semitic idiom. They would arise most naturally in the mouths of persons whose first language was Semitic and who had become sufficiently Hellenized to compose poetry in Greek. These expressions would then have been taken over by native poets because they were striking, effective, and nicely distanced from ordinary language. The hypothesis of immigrant poets will occupy us again later.

² Cf. pp. 90 f., 99, Brown, 7 f.

Semitic contributions have been much emphasized. Of the non-Semitic literate peoples of western Asia, those of western Anatolia—the Phrygians, Lydians, Carians, and Lycians—necessarily remain out of the discussion, as we know too little of their poetic or mythological traditions to draw any useful conclusions. But we should not underrate the importance of those from further east who were literate at an earlier period: the Hittites (with their Luwian kin) and the Hurrians. Both learned cuneiform writing from the south, and their mythologies, we can see, are strongly influenced by Mesopotamian traditions. There are, nevertheless, important native Anatolian elements in them. Greeks will have encountered Luwian- and Hurrian-speakers in Cyprus, Cilicia, and north Syria. There seem to be at least some Anatolian loan words in Greek (p. 13), and we have noted various myths for which Hurrian or Hittite tradition provided the best parallels. The major case is the Succession Myth in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Some elements of it are paralleled in the Babylonian *Enūma eliš*, but it is the Hurro-Hittite *Song of [Kumarbi]* that shows the deeper affinity. The connection is strengthened by the appearance in the *Theogony* of figures such as Atlas, who has similarities with the Hurrian Ubelluri and Ullikummi, and Typhoeus, whom later authors domicile in a Cilician cave and about whom they tell a tale that is clearly a version of an old Hittite myth. Then there are the myths of the Aloadai, the imprisonment of Ares in a bronze vessel, Pelops and Myrtilus, the Golden Fleece, and Medea, all of which appear to have Anatolian connections.³

The Golden Fleece seems to be a reflection of Hittite cult usage. It is not the only one. The Greek prayer formula 'come hither, whether you are in ... or in ... or ...' is matched, so far as I see, only in Hittite invocations. The Homeric notion that the gods have their own names for certain individuals, different from the names used by mortals, has its only ancient parallel in proto-Hittic and Hittite ritual texts. The funeral of Patroclus as described in the *Iliad* has striking analogies with Hittite royal funerary ritual. The necromantic procedures attributed to Odysseus during his visit to Hades likewise have their closest analogies in Hittite ritual; in this case the background seems to be Hurrian.⁴

Finally an aspect of poetic technique may be recalled at this point, namely the use in epic narrative of what I have called genre scenes, drawn-out descriptions of transitional activities such as feasting, chariot journeys, and forging. These are a feature of the Ugaritic and the Hurro-Hittite traditions, but not of the Mesopotamian; nor does Hebrew prose

³ See pp. 121, 362 f., 473-5, 479 f.

⁴ See pp. 272, 352 f., 398 f., 426 f.

narrative have anything of the kind.⁵ Possibly this is a matter in which Ugaritic poetry shows Hurrian influence.

WRITTEN AND ORAL TRADITION IN THE NEAR EAST

The importance and limitations of written tradition

The next question is whether, to account for the passage of so many literary and mythological motifs between east and west, we are to think in terms of written or solely of oral transmission.

We have become accustomed to the idea that early Greek poetry was primarily intended for oral delivery, to be heard rather than read. There obviously was such a thing as written transmission, but we know next to nothing of how it was initiated or sustained. We hear of authors dedicating their books at temples, but we have no idea whether anyone took any particular care of them there or whether members of the public might be expected to consult them occasionally. Most people knew the epics and the songs of the lyric poets only from hearing them performed. The poets themselves (at any rate, the ones known to us) must have been literate, or at least in contact with literate people, but it is hard to imagine them as bookish.

In Mesopotamia the situation was very different. There was an established scribal tradition going back for well over two thousand years. The Sumerian and Akkadian texts which are available to us for comparison with Greek poetry were recorded in cuneiform on clay tablets. Many of them were perpetuated in this form for centuries, some for over a millennium. These were clearly, in a sense, 'classic' works. They belonged to a scribal curriculum and were copied as part of the scribal education. Consequently, knowledge of them spread with the discipline of cuneiform writing, so that copies of the same text often turn up at many different sites, not only in Babylonia and Assyria but wherever scribes were trained to write Akkadian, as far afield as Susa in Elam, Ugarit on the Syrian coast, Megiddo in Palestine, or Amarna in Upper Egypt.

The Gilgamesh epic can be traced over a particularly wide area (see map on p. 591) and over a particularly long span of time, from the Old Babylonian period to the Seleucid. It must have been known over the whole area of Akkadian literacy, at least to the educated classes. Indeed, it crossed linguistic boundaries as the use of cuneiform did: fragments of

⁵ See pp. 201–6, 388 f. The motif of the goddess's self-adornment (pp. 203 f.) is a special case.



Sites where fragments of the Gilgamesh epic have been found

translations or adaptations into Hurrian and Hittite have been found at Hattusa. The same applies to other classics, at least to *Atrahasis* and *Šar lamhāri*. The Hittites also translated Hurrian literary texts such as the *Song of [Kumarbi]* and the *Song of Ullikummi*. So here are definite cases of Near Eastern poems spreading from one country to another by written transmission.

The period in which this was happening, about the fourteenth century, was a time of far-flung international relations and diplomatic correspondence, for which Akkadian served as the *lingua franca* over a vast area. This is clearly documented by the Amarna Letters, an archive of state correspondence with the pharaohs Amenophis III and IV dating approximately from the years 1360–1330. The letters come from kings and princelings of Babylon, Assyria, Mitanni, Hatti, Arzawa (south-west Anatolia), Cyprus, Ugarit, and a whole string of minor Canaanite principalities. Nearly all are written in Akkadian, in most cases heavily laced with Canaanitisms of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar; in other words, in an Akkadian learned in local scribal schools as an official medium of communication. The pharaohs had secretaries with a similar training who drafted the replies. Amarna has also yielded an Egyptian–Akkadian glossary. At the polyglot entrepôt of Ugarit the remains of several 'language dictionaries' have been found, giving equivalents in three or four languages (Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, Ugaritic).⁶

⁶ *Ugaritica* v, 1968, 230–51.

It is against this historical background that Cyrus Gordon throws out the suggestion that

The Gilgamesh epic may well have reached the Aegean in both Akkadian and in translations (perhaps including Mycenaean Greek), during the Amarna Age.⁷

There are, however, grounds for entertaining serious reservations about such a hypothesis. The Akkadian-writing area was large, but it had its limits. It is significant that the scribe of King Tarhundaradu of Arzawa writes to the pharaoh in Hittite and appends a note asking that any reply should be in Hittite (*nesumnili*).⁸ This was presumably not an assertion of Anatolian nationalism but an admission that the Arzawan secretariat lacked competence in Akkadian. If Arzawa was on the fringe of the Akkadian-using zone, Crete and Greece were outside it. There are no communications from Minoan or Achaean rulers in the Amarna archive, and no Akkadian-Greek glossaries (indeed, no Greek writing at all) at Ugarit. The famous cache of Babylonian cylinder seals found in the Mycenaean palace at Thebes⁹ cannot be taken as evidence that anyone in the Aegean area was able to read cuneiform. Nor could they have done so without extensive specialized training of the kind provided in the oriental scribal schools. There is no trace of any such school in the Aegean. So the conditions which led to the translation of the Gilgamesh epic into Hurrian and Hittite simply did not exist in Mycenaean Greece.¹⁰

Moving forward to the time of the Assyrian empire, between the ninth and the seventh century, we find that although an Akkadian-speaking power was now taking firm political control of a much larger area than it ever did in the second millennium, the language was no longer so widely used. Aramaic was becoming more prevalent even in Assyria and Babylonia, and while it would perhaps be an exaggeration to characterize it as a *lingua franca* at this period, it was moving steadily towards that status. The Assyrian kings had Aramaic scribes who wrote on leather or papyrus scrolls and wooden or ivory boards as well as cuneiform scribes writing on clay tablets.¹¹

To explain how significant features of book format found their way from the cuneiform tradition to the Greek, Carl Wendel hypothesized the existence of a body of Aramaic literature on scrolls, in part translated

⁷ Gordon (1962), 60.

⁸ EA 32.

⁹ E. Porada, *AJO* 28, 1981, 1-78.

¹⁰ Stolla (1978), 370, points out that the Hittite king on occasion dispatched a missive to the king of Ahhiyawa, generally taken to be a Greek domain, and she infers that there must have been Greeks able to read cuneiform Hittite. But communication did not necessarily depend on this. The letter might have been read out by the envoy and translated orally by an interpreter.

¹¹ See Oded, 100; *CAH* iii(1), 239 f., iii(2), 184-6.

from Akkadian. The fifth-century *Ahiqar* papyrus from Upper Egypt and the survival of Gilgamesh motifs in later Iranian tradition are adduced as indirect evidence for the currency of such a literature in the Persian period.¹² The Gilgamesh epic and other Akkadian classics must have been available in many palace, temple, and private libraries in Assyria and Babylonia,¹³ and there must have been scribes capable of translating them into Aramaic, if there was any call for it. The further transmission from Aramaic into Greek is at least conceivable, more readily so than a Mycenaean translation from cuneiform. The Greeks certainly learned from the Levant how to write in alphabetic script and how to lay out a poetic text in a leather or papyrus book. That they might in the process have become acquainted with the content of a particular book is not altogether beyond belief. But even if there was such a book—a *Gilgamesh*, say—it could only account for a fraction of the literary influence from the orient that we have seen reason to assume. One would have to postulate dozens of such books for the hypothesis to be fruitful; and if they existed, it must be granted that Greek tradition has lost all recollection of them.

Oral performance and transmission in Mesopotamia

If written transmission of poetry from the Near East to Greece is unlikely, what are the possibilities of oral transmission? Were the written poems known to us from Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and the Old Testament orally performed and aurally experienced?

The first point to make is that poetic form itself is something evolved to please the ear, not the eye. When we read English verse that scans and rhymes, we may take it that its author intended us, if not actually to declaim it, at least to hear it mentally and appreciate it as we would appreciate a recitation. The rhythmic patternings that we discern in Akkadian poetry (more easily in some poems than in others), such as the balance of 2+2 or 3+3 accentual units in the verse, the strong preference for a long syllable in the penultimate place, the grouping of lines in twos or fours, and the common device by which a couplet is repeated with one or two words varied or added, as in *Atrahasis* I 70-3,

mišil maššarti mišum ibašši:
bitu lawi, ilu ul idi;
mišil maššarti mišum ibašši,
Ekur lawi, Ellil ul idi.

It was the mid watch of night,
the house was surrounded, the god did not know;
it was the mid watch of night,
Ekur was surrounded, Ellil did not know.

¹² Wendel, 93 f.; cf. above, pp. 26 f. On the survival of Gilgamesh motifs in later oriental tradition cf. Tigay, 251-5; S. Dalley, *JRAS* 1991, 1-17 and in J. C. Reeves (ed.), *Tracing the Threads. Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigraphy*, Atlanta 1994, 239-69.

¹³ For these libraries cf. S. Parpola, *JNES* 42, 1983, 1-29; *CAH* iii(2), 227 f.

—all this is clearly designed for the benefit of the hearer.

The rhetorical scheme just illustrated goes back to Sumerian poetry, where we frequently meet passages in which the thought develops slowly through a thicket of repetition:

From the upper heaven she had her heart set on the netherworld,
the goddess had from the upper heaven her heart set on the netherworld.
Inanna had from the upper heaven her heart set on the netherworld.
My lady forsook heaven, forsook earth, went down into Hades.
Inanna forsook heaven, forsook earth, went down into Hades.
Lordship she forsook, queenship she forsook, went down into Hades.¹⁴

Such a style is intelligible only as song. The earliest Sumerian poetic texts are written in such an incomplete way that only someone already familiar with their sound could have read them.¹⁵

It is true that, once a tradition of written poetry has evolved, poets may occasionally incorporate features that depend on the visual medium for their effect, such as acrostics, or (as in Greek from the Hellenistic age) a layout of verses that creates a pictorial image. From the eleventh century Akkadian acrostic poems appear, most notably the *Theodicy*, in which every line in each of the 27 eleven-line stanzas began with the same sign, the 27 signs spelling out the sentence *a-na-ku sa-ag-gi-il-ki-i-nam-ub-bi-ib, ma-aš-ma-šu, ka-ri-bu ša i-li ú šar-ri*, 'I am Saggil-kinam-ubbib, incantation-priest, adorer of the god(s) and the king'.¹⁶ In such a case any oral performance of the work was presumably of subordinate importance. But these comparatively late and rare *jeux d'esprit* do not invalidate the general point that poetic form was from the start an embellishment of language uttered and heard.

Many Sumerian poetic texts carry a subscription identifying the genre of composition, and these subscriptions usually refer to musical instruments or songs, for instance:

It is a composition for *tigi* [a stringed instrument], pertaining to Inanna.

It is a *balbale*-song pertaining to Inanna.

A [*sir-gi*]d ('long song') of Ninurta.

A tambourine lament of Gula.¹⁷

¹⁴ *The Descent of Inanna* 1–6, trs. Jacobsen, 206.

¹⁵ Cf. B. Alster in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 24, and in *CANE* iv, 2318 f.

¹⁶ *BWL* 63 ff.; *ibid.* 67 for other Akkadian and Hebrew acrostics.

¹⁷ Jacobsen, 12, 15, 272, 477. Cf. C. Wilcke in S. Lieberman (ed.), *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen*, Chicago 1976, 257–9; J. S. Cooper in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 115.

There are lamentations for destroyed temples and cities, labelled *balaḡ*, after a type of enormous drum, and designed to be sung by *gala* priests, whom the god Enki created for this duty.¹⁸ There are hymns and other cultic compositions whose ritual performance is evident from repeated directions in the text for prostrations(?), antiphons, or refrains.¹⁹ Mythological and 'epic' narrative poems are subscribed *zà-mí*, 'lyre', indicating that they were sung to the accompaniment of that instrument.²⁰ In the 'Ballade des héros du temps jadis', traditions about the past are summed up in the phrase 'whenever it has been brought to our hearing from a predecessor's mouth'.²¹

Many of the Akkadian hymns and narrative poems also contain internal evidence of oral performance. The incipits, as was shown in chapter 4 (p. 171), frequently make use of the verb *zamāru* 'sing', most often in the formula 'I (will) sing (of)—' or 'let me sing (of)—'. We also find 'let us sing', and 'sing' in the plural imperative.²²

Sometimes these references to singing or to songs are supported by other indications of live performance. There are often references to the song being 'heard'. The poet of the *Agušaya* hymn prays for the long life of Hammurabi, 'the king who heard this song', and he says

I have praised Ishtar, queen of goddesses ...

I have let all the people hear her mighty qualities.

The *Instructions of Šube-amelim* begin with the words 'Hear ye the counsel of Šube-amelim'. Various hymns begin likewise:

I sing a song of the Mistress of the Gods:

O friends, pay heed! O warriors, hear!

Hear, world-quarters, the praise of queen Nanaya.

Ever hear the brave deeds of the hero,
of Marduk the [king] of the gods.²³

The poet of a hymn to Shamash for Assurbanipal expects it to be performed:

¹⁸ S. N. Kramer, *Acta Sumerologica* 3, 1981, 1–11; cf. J. Krecher, *Sumerische Kultlyrik*, Wiesbaden 1966, 27–8, 35–41; M. E. Cohen, *The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia*, Potomac 1988, 13 ff.; J. A. Black in P. Michalowski et al. (edd.), *Velles Peraules. Studies Presented to M. Civil*, Barcelona 1993, 23–36.

¹⁹ See Jacobsen, xiii, 18, 114, 120, 124, 129, 453, 456, etc.; so in the Akkadian *Agušaya* hymn

²⁰ Wilcke, *op. cit.*, 246–8.

²¹ Wilcke (as p. 83, n. 76), 138 and facing, line 4.

²² *JRAS* Centenary Supp. pl. VI i 5 (Old Babylonian hymn to Papulegarra); RA 22, 1925, 172. 1 (Ishtar hymn of Ammi-ditana). See further C. Wilcke, ZA 67, 1977, 154 f., 172 f., 175 f.; Hecker, 70 n. 1; CAD Z 37–8; CPLM nos. 3 rev. 19, 6 rev. 20.

²³ CT 15. 1 i 1–2; CPLM no. 4 (Nanaya hymn of Sargon II) rev. ii 13'; VAT 13719 (LKA 16). 4.

[Whoever] will sing this [son]g of Shamash
and speak the name of Assurbanipal,
in abundance and justice all his days
may he shepherd Enlil's people ...
Whoso lets this song fall into oblivion
and does not glorify Shamash ...
may his string-playing displease his people,
and his paean be a thistle-thorn.²⁴

The mythological and historical narrative poems are equally considered as 'songs' that are 'heard' by 'all the people'. *Atrahasis* ends with the lines:

For [thy] (Enlil's) praise may the Igigi
hear this song and exalt thy greatness.

—I have sung of the Flood for all the people. Hear ye!

Anzu (at least in the Standard Babylonian version; the relevant part of the Old Babylonian version is not preserved) began in hymnic vein:

Of the egregious son of the king of settlements, the beloved of Mami,
the mighty one, let me constantly sing, the god firstborn of Ellil...
Hear ye the praise of the mighty one's strength.

The poem that was generally cited under the title *Enūma eliš* after its opening words appears to be referred to by the poet himself (VII 161) as *zamāru ša Marduk*, 'the Song of Marduk'.²⁵ The author of the late Erra epic, Kabit-ilani-Marduk, refers to his work both as a 'tablet' (*kammu*, V 42; *ṭuppu*, V 57) and as a 'song' (*zamāru*, V 49, 59).

In certain passages it is envisaged that the composition will be preserved from one generation to another by oral transmission. At the end of *Enūma eliš*, after the recital of Marduk's fifty names, the poet says:

May they be grasped, and may the senior demonstrate (them to the junior);

may the wise (and) the learned man confer together.

May the father repeat (them) and teach (them to) the sons;

may the Shepherd's and Herdsman's [= the ruler's] ears be open.

²⁴ KAR 361 obv. 1 ff. (ANET 387; Seux, 65 f.; Foster, 726).

²⁵ The final line of *Atrahasis*, quoted above (in Akkadian: *abūba ana kullat niši uzammer*), might suggest that its poet thought of the work as *zamār abūbi*, 'The Song of the Flood'. Its scribal title (again from its initial words) was *inūma ilū awilum*, 'When the gods were (on the level of) man'. The Hittite version of the Gilgamesh epic is entitled 'The Song of Gilgamesh', and Hittite mythological texts bear such titles as 'The Song of Kumarbi', 'The Song of Ullikummi', perhaps under Akkadian influence.

Similarly in a Middle Assyrian narrative poem:

Let me ever sing of Aššur's strong victory ...
May the earlier man hear and repeat [it] to the later.²⁶

In other places, however, it is acknowledged that the scribe has a valuable role to play in recording songs and preserving them for the future. In one of the Sumerian encomiastic hymns composed for Shulgi of Ur, the singer is urged to preserve the old traditional songs, but also to cooperate with the scribe, so that compositions both old and new may be safeguarded against oblivion:

He (the *nar* singer) should attend to what is old, and not allow it to be neglected.

Let the scribe stand by, and catch (the songs) in his hand(writing),
let the singer stand by, and 'speak' to (the scribe) from (the songs)
so that they will be perpetuated thus in the scribal college.

So that none of my praise-songs should perish,
so that none of my words should be dropped from the tradition.²⁷

In another of these hymns the singer is apparently recommended to seek out songs from the archive and have them read to him so that he can learn them:

To (these) unshatterable heavenly stars, my everlasting lines,
may the singer conduct the scribe; may he have him look at them;
and he (the man) of Nisaba's wisdom and intelligence
read them out for him, as from a lapis lazuli tablet!²⁸

It is generally believed that most of the surviving Sumerian literary texts, including those about Gilgamesh, were written down in or soon after Shulgi's time; he is known to have had a strong interest in Gilgamesh (above, p. 69), and it seems that he may have been instrumental in getting much current oral poetry recorded in writing. In a hymn in praise of Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (20th century) it is said:

You have caused the tablets in the scriptorium to attest your
praise-song.

May the scribe read them and perpetuate your praise,

²⁶ *En. el.* VII 145–8; LKA 62 (The Hunter and the Asses), rev. 7–9.

²⁷ *Shulgi B* 275, 312–14, 330 f., as tentatively translated by J. A. Black in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 100 f.

²⁸ *Shulgi E* 248–51, as translated by J. Klein in H. Behrens et al. (edd.), *DUMU-E₂.DUB-BA-A. Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*, Philadelphia 1989, 300 f. Nis(s)aba is the goddess of scribal learning.

in the scriptorium may your fame never cease to resound.²⁹

The Sumerian poet apparently did not use writing during the composition process, but first meditated a poem and then taught it to a professional singer for performance, or to a scribe for writing down. The earliest known author, Enheduanna, records in her poem *Ninmešarra* that she composed at night and had the singer repeat the song the next day at noon.³⁰ In the hymn to the temple of Kesh we read that Nisaba had developed Enlil's thoughts on the temple into a fully formed poem which she then fixed in writing:

Out of all lands Kesh was the one raising the head,
and (so) Enlil was moved to sing the praises of Kesh.
Establisher of the standard version thereof was Nisaba,
she spun, as it were, a web out of those words,
and writing them down on a tablet she laid them (ready) to hand.³¹

In the epilogue to *Enūma eliš* the written text is represented as having been made on the basis of older oral tradition, and it is to serve in its turn as the basis for future recitations:

The exposition that an older man gave in speech in his presence
he wrote down and established for later men to hear.³²

Kabti-ilani-Marduk, like Enheduanna some fifteen centuries earlier, conceived his poem in the night and the next day set about putting it into circulation. He looks forward to its indefinite preservation both in performance and in literary tradition:

The composer of the tablet about him (Erra or Ishum) is Kabti-ilani-
Marduk, son of Dabību:
he (the god) revealed it to him in the night, and, just as he spoke it in
his sleep, he did not miss anything out,
did not add a single line to it.
Erra heard it and it found his approval,
the (matter) of Ishum his herald was pleasing to him,
(and) all the gods gave praise with him,
And thus spoke the warrior Erra:
"The god who praises this song, in his shrine may wealth be piled up,

²⁹ Falkenstein-von Soden, 125 f.

³⁰ W. W. Hallo and J. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna*, New Haven 1968, 32 (*Ninmešarra* 138–40).

³¹ Lines 8–12, trs. Jacobsen, 378 f. Fragments of a version of this hymn have been found dating back to the Early Dynastic period, before the middle of the third millennium.

³² *En. el.* VII 157 f.

while he who despises it, may he not smell the burnt offering.
The king who magnifies my name, may he rule the world-quarters;
the prince who utters the praise of my valour, may he have no rival.
The singer/musician (*nāru*) who cries it forth will not die in the
plague;³³
the utterance of it is pleasing to king(s) and prince(s).
The scribe who learns it will escape from (or survive in) the enemy
land, and be honoured in his own.
In the shrine of the learned where they ever speak my name, I will
make them wise (lit. open their ear).
In the house where this tablet is set, though Erra rage and the Seven
strike,
the sword of pestilence will not come at him: safety is assured for him.
Let this song be established for ever, let it hold good indefinitely;
let all the lands hear (it) and praise my heroic deeds,
let the peoples of the settlements see (it) and magnify my name!"³⁴

Nāru (line 53) is a general word for a professional singer or musician. It derives from the Sumerian *nar*, which is the word used in the passages quoted above from Shulgi Hymns B and E. The *nar* had a distinct status from very ancient times. Already in the Early Dynastic period there is mention of an *é-nar* or 'House of Singers', and of the reception of a *nar* as a visiting dignitary. He does not seem to have been an itinerant bard but a settled member of society. He owned and played instruments with which he accompanied his singing. Differentiation was made between various sorts of singer according to the instrument used or the official standing enjoyed. We hear of singers of different ethnic categories, and of both sexes.³⁵

The Shulgi texts imply that the singer is not versed in the art of writing and needs the assistance of the scribe in order to get his songs recorded, or to acquaint himself with songs previously recorded. According to a Sumerian mythical account of the creation of man, Enki assigned the musical arts to the blind.³⁶ Of course not all singers were blind, but music was a natural profession for a blind person to follow, as in other ancient societies.

On the other hand the distinction between the singer and the scribe should not be regarded as absolute. In the Sumerian scribal schools

³³ Erra was the plague-god.

³⁴ *Erra* V 42–61.

³⁵ H. Hartmann, *Die Musik der sumerischen Kultur*, Frankfurt am Main 1960, 147–58; J. Renger, *ZA* 59, 1969, 172 ff., 180–7; A. Westenholz, *Afo* 25, 1974, 95–110; J. Goodnick Westenholz in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 150–3.

³⁶ *Enki and Ninmah* 62–5 (Jacobsen, 159 f.; Bottéro–Kramer, 191).

music was studied among other subjects.³⁷ A scribe might therefore be capable of composing songs, and there are possible references to this in *Shulgi E* and a hymn of Ishme-Dagan.³⁸ In any case, those educated in these schools did not necessarily go on to become professional scribes, any more than graduates of a modern university necessarily become academics. They might become merchants or administrators,³⁹ and presumably they might become musicians. There is no direct evidence of this in the third and second millennia, but from the Neo-Assyrian period we know of a group (probably a clan) of 'chief singers' in Aššur who copied tablets, signing the colophons as scribes, and whose library contained texts—some of them several centuries old—of *Anzu*, *Etanu*, *The Descent of Ishtar*, *Gilgamesh*, and *Enuma eliš*, besides hymns and other poetic and lexical works.⁴⁰

If and when one of these Assyrian singers performed one of those classic compositions, we may suppose that he gave it in a form closely corresponding to the written text in his archive, just as a Greek rhapsode of about 400 BC would recite Homer in a fixed, canonical form, from memory, and might also own a copy of the text.⁴¹ The prestige accorded to written documents in Mesopotamia, and the existence of written traditions of poetry from before 2500 BC, must have exercised a strong normative influence on the text of particular compositions and given them a much greater degree of fixity than they might have had in a purely oral tradition. A scribe was trained to copy his exemplar faithfully and to certify at the end that he had done so; if the exemplar was damaged, he noted the fact, he did not introduce a conjectural restoration.

However, the existence of divergent recensions of some poems makes it clear that during the second millennium the production of a written text did not by any means fix a composition once and for all. It could still undergo a significant degree of recasting or expansion, or perhaps a different singer's oral version might be recorded at another location or time.⁴² In some cases the variation between texts looks editorial in character, due to someone working on the basis of one or more written sources; in other cases it looks like the result of a singer retelling the story from memory and changing things round slightly. A

³⁷ Å. W. Sjöberg in Lieberman (as n. 17), 168–79.

³⁸ The interpretation of the passages is debated. See B. Alster in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 47–

³⁹ Cf. J. S. Cooper in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 110, with literature.

⁴⁰ O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur*, ii, Uppsala 1986, 34–41; Goodnick Westenholz in Vogelzang–Vanstiphout, 152, who asks 'Were they exceptional since they are chief singers? Is this picture also true for Babylonia? How far can we push back this picture?'

⁴¹ Xen. *Symp.* 3, 5–6; *Mem.* 4, 2, 10.

⁴² Cf. Webster (1958), 78.

survey of the textual evidence for those narrative poems which exist in more than one copy leads us to conclude that poems originating in the Old Babylonian period, while often preserved down to the Neo-Assyrian kingdom or later, usually underwent substantial revision in the course of that transmission. Poems composed in or after the late second millennium, on the other hand, were transmitted in a more or less fixed form. Even with these, however, the variations between copies are more considerable than can be explained from errors of transcription or dictation. They include dialect variations, differences of word order or phrasing, substitution of synonyms, and occasional plus-lines.

In the earlier period—say before the fourteenth century—it seems that the existence of a written text helped to keep a poem in the singers' repertoire and preserve its basic identity, but was not felt as a bar to free recomposition or expansion. This might be undertaken by creative singers, or by scribes with literary instincts. A master scribe and incantation-priest of the Kassite period in Uruk, Sin-leqe-unninni, was credited with the composition of the *Gilgamesh* epic, and this is commonly understood as referring to the production of the 'standard' version (probably without Tablet XII). In the prologue, which may be his addition, we are invited to go to Uruk, unlock the copper chest that contains *Gilgamesh's* own record of his adventures on a lapis lazuli tablet, and read it for ourselves: the implied claim is, not necessarily that the poem is a verbatim copy from an original written document, but that it is based on the authority of one.⁴³ In this age of sacerdotal learning and codification the concept of the fixed, standard text took stronger hold, even if in some cases, such as *Atrahasis*, exemplars of more than one recension survived to be recopied later.

This standardization does not necessarily mean that the poems did not continue to be performed orally by singers. In Greece we know that rhapsodes continued to perform the Homeric poems for many centuries after the text had become fixed in written tradition. I have already referred to the 'chief singers' in Aššur with their library of texts, and drawn the analogy with the text-owning rhapsode. The parallel can be taken further. The minor textual variations in the Neo-Assyrian and Late Babylonian copies of standard texts may be compared to the so-called 'wild' variants characteristic of Homeric texts down to about 150 BC. These are of a quasi-oral nature and presumably due to the production of copies by rhapsodes and others who knew the poems so well that they did not need to attend to the exemplar before them word by word but

⁴³ Cf. W. Moran in *CANE* iv, 2331 f.

could easily introduce variations, especially through recollection of similar passages elsewhere.⁴⁴

The implication of the argument is that in the generations before Homer, and in his time, the Gilgamesh epic and other Akkadian poems might still be heard as well as read, and moreover that they would be heard in much the same form as that in which we read them in the Neo-Assyrian copies. What we should very much like to know is *where* they might have been heard: in what settings, and how near the Mediterranean.

But we have little idea where or when narrative poetry had ever been performed. There were certainly court singers, and it is a reasonable supposition that Shulgi and other kings of the Ur III dynasty listened keenly to the Sumerian epics about Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and Gilgamesh. In a Sumerian narrative poem about Inanna, in which the goddess punishes a man called Šukaletuda who raped her while she was asleep, she tells him that his name will endure in the sweet songs that will be sung in royal palaces by young minstrels and hummed by herdsmen as they churn their milk.⁴⁵ The later royal epics were doubtless sung before the kings whose exploits they celebrated. Performance in the king's presence does not necessarily imply a restricted audience considering that Sargon of Akkad is reported to have had 5,400 soldiers dining with him daily. In any case there cannot have been any barrier keeping the knowledge of such entertainments from the citizen body at large. The poet of the Tukulti-Ninurta epic seems to envisage his work being performed publicly with lyre accompaniment:

Let me e[ver praise] the designs of the gods [...
The ...] of the gods let me se[t] in the mouth of the people,
[...] to the bearer of the lyre [et me ...]⁴⁶

We can imagine performances at festivals or at private celebrations. When a *nāru* was received in another city, it seems likely that he would have sung there. When the king led his armies on campaigns to east, west, or north, as happened regularly under the Assyrian empire, there might well have been singers in attendance to divert them in the evenings with songs of every sort, including, perhaps, celebrations of previous military triumphs. Some singers might have stayed with garrisons in conquered territories.

⁴⁴ Cf. C. Wilcke, ZA 79, 1989, 169.

⁴⁵ Bottéro-Kramer, 266.

⁴⁶ Tuk.-Nin. vi (B rev.) 30'-32'.

Oral performance and transmission in Syria and Palestine

The Ugaritic poems, too, appear to have been composed primarily for oral performance. More conspicuously than the Akkadian poems, they are marked by the use of stereotyped formulae and by mechanical repetitions, for example in the proposal and execution of a plan, or in the transmission of a message. The poet of the Nikkal-Is hymn twice uses the word *āšr* 'I (will) sing', while in the hymn to the Kotharatu we find the lines

Behold, in my mouth is the recounting (*spr*) of them,
on my lips their articulation (*mt*).⁴⁷

The root *spr* means 'count out, recount, recite' and also 'record in writing'. It appears in occasional notes in the epic texts where a passage is to be repeated:

And return to the recitation (*mspr*) of 'When the pages were sent'.

And he shall return to the recitation of this.

He shall return and recite (*yspr*) this five times.⁴⁸

These written texts, therefore, were intended to support oral performances. The currency of divergent texts of the Baal epic (p. 87) is an indication that the oral tradition still had some life in it.

Was it an old tradition? Ugaritic scholars have tended to assume that the poems originated several centuries earlier than the date of the tablets, because they seem to ignore many of the deities actually honoured in Ugarit at the time on the evidence of priestly lists and personal names.⁴⁹ Certainly the poems do not seem freshly minted in fourteenth-century Ugarit. The geographical settings of some of the myths have been argued to point to a tradition based further south, more specifically in the Bashan region, east of the Sea of Galilee.⁵⁰ The age of this tradition, however, is impossible to determine.

The colophons of the tablets signed by Ilmilku may yield valuable clues to the status of these written copies. They are as follows.

KTU 1. 4 (Baal epic): [*spr il mlk t'ly nqmd mlk ūgrt*.

6 (Baal epic): *spr il mlk šbny lmd ātn prln rb khnm rb nqdm t'y nqmd mlk ūgrt ādn yrgb b'ī tmmn*.

⁴⁷ KTU 1. 24. 1, 38, 45-7.

⁴⁸ KTU 1. 4 v 42, 19 iv 9-22 marg., 23. 56 f. The rendering 'recite' should not be taken to exclude some form of sung delivery.

⁴⁹ See M. S. Drower in CAH ii(2). 155, with references.

⁵⁰ Margalit, 257 f., 473 f.

16 (Keret epic): *spr il mlk t'y*.

17 (Aqhat epic): [*spr il mlk šbny lmd ātn*] *prln*.

The clearest phrases are:

spr il mlk (šbny) = 'Ilimilku (the Shubanite) wrote (it)' or 'Is the scribe'.

nqmd mlk ūgrt (ādny yrgb b'q t'mn) = 'Niqmad king of Ugarit (lord of Yrgb, master of T'mn)'.

rb khnm rb nqdm = 'chief of the priests, chief of the Shepherds'.⁵¹

More ambiguous are the words *t'y* (4, 6, 16) and *lmd* (6, and restored in 17). To take the latter first: the root *lmd* means 'learn', but doubling the second consonant converts it into the factitive, 'teach'. In the colophon, *lmd* could represent **lāmidu* 'learner', 'pupil', with the following name in the genitive, or it could be a finite verb form from the geminate stem, **lammida*, 'taught (it)', with *Atn-prln* as its subject. This gives us the alternative renderings:

(a) '(The one who) wrote (it was) Ilimilku the Shubanite, pupil of Atn-prln, chief priest, chief Shepherd.'⁵²

(b) '(The one who) wrote (it was) Ilimilku the Shubanite, (the one who) taught (it to him was) Atn-prln, chief priest and chief Shepherd.'

In favour of (b) is the apparent parallelism *spr il mlk ... lmd ātn prln*.⁵³ It is a plausible scenario that the high priest should have been a professional reciter of the Baal epic and of the theologically charged Aqhat poem, and that his oral versions should have been recorded by a copyist for the manse library.⁵⁴ The collaboration between singer and scribe corresponds to what we saw to have been a normal situation in Mesopotamia when a poem was first written down. However, the extant tablets cannot have been the very first written versions, as they contain corruptions arising from visual confusion of similar letters. We have to postulate at least one intermediate copy (perhaps on waxed tablets) between the reciter and the surviving text.

The other problematic word was *t'y*. The only well-attested sense of this root is 'dedicate, consecrate', of offerings to the gods. It is most

⁵¹ The Shepherds were an administrative class at Ugarit.

⁵² Here it is ambiguous whether 'chief priest and chief Shepherd' refers to Ilimilku or to Atn-prln.

⁵³ O Eissfeldt, *Sanchuniaton von Beirut und Ilimilku von Ugarit*, Halle (Saale) 1952, 49.

⁵⁴ Even if *lmd* is taken as in (a) (as advocated by D. R. Hillers and M. H. McCall, *HSCP* 80, 1976, 19–23), the effective meaning may not have been very different. In calling himself a pupil of Atn-prln, Ilimilku would more likely be referring to his learning the poems than to technical training in the scribe's craft.

simply taken in the colophons as a finite verb, parallel to *spr* and *lmd*.⁵⁵ This will mean that the tablets on which Ilimilku, instructed by Atn-prln, wrote out the great Baal epic were then dedicated to the god by King Niqmaddu. *Keret*, on the other hand, if the colophon of 16 is complete, was dedicated by Ilimilku himself.

All in all, it looks as though Ilimilku's copying of the Baal, Keret, and Aqhat epics was not a routine job but a special undertaking, sponsored by the city's highest authorities, with the aim of establishing a corpus of canonical texts by which to regulate future recitations.

As for the possible occasion and manner of performance, it may be noticed that there are references in the poems to singing at banquets. The main relevant passage appears in the Baal epic and has been quoted on p. 202. As the gods feast in joy at Baal's victory over Yammu, a 'lad pleasant of voice' stands up and, accompanying himself with cymbal-clappers (*msltm*, = Hebrew *m'siltayim*), sings of Baal in the recesses of Šapan. This could be taken as a hymn, something like one of those psalms in which Yahweh's defeat of Leviathan is celebrated, or it could be a projection into mythical time of the Baal epic itself, rather as Hesiod represents the Muses as singing to Zeus a prototype of the *Theogony*. In another banqueting fragment,

El was sitting with 'Aqtart, El the judge with Hadad the shepherd,
who was singing and melodizing to the lyre and pipe,
to drum and cymbal-clappers, to ivory castanets,
with the comrades of Kothar, the pleasant ones.⁵⁶

Finally let us briefly consider the transmission of the Hebrew songs and poetic fragments preserved in the Old Testament. In one or two cases an older document is cited as the source, like the *Book of the Wars of the Lord* (Num. 21. 14) and the *Book of the Upright* (Josh. 10. 13, 2 Sam. 1. 18). But oral tradition must have played an important part, especially in the preservation of the earliest pieces such as the Song of Deborah (Jdg. 5) and the Song of Moses (Deut. 32), which appear to date from the eleventh century, generations before the oldest detectable Hebrew books and the oldest inscriptions. There are references in the biblical text itself to oral traditions of song. Deborah's song anticipates its own dissemination by travellers (5. 10–11, obscure in detail). God instructs Moses to write his song down but also to 'teach it to the children of Israel, put it in their mouths, so that this song may be for my witness against the children of Israel' (Deut. 31. 19, cf. 22). Similarly

⁵⁵ See Eissfeldt, *op. cit.*, 49 f.

⁵⁶ KTU 1. 108 obv. 2–5.

David's dirge for Saul and Jonathan, while known to the writer of 2 Samuel (1. 18 ff.) from the *Book of the Upright*, is represented as having been taught to the people of Judah on the king's instructions. The triumph song in Numbers 21. 27-30 is quoted as something repeated by the *mōš'lim*, that is, those learned in poems and sayings.

We cannot identify these reciters more closely, but it is clear that music and song flourished at various levels in early Hebrew society. King David himself was celebrated as a musician who sang to the lyre (1 Sam. 16. 16 ff., Amos 6. 5). There were court singers of both sexes, who presumably provided regular entertainment as well as praising the king on special occasions.⁵⁷ They will perhaps have sung Psalm 72, which looks like a coronation anthem, and Psalm 45, an encomium for a Hebrew king's wedding to a Tyrian princess (very probably Ahab's wedding to Jezebel). There were temple singers who used lyres and harps (1 Ki. 10. 12, cf. 1 Chr. 25. 1-7, Amos 5. 23), no doubt in the performance of cult hymns and the like. There were prophets and charismatics, sometimes gathered in communities, who sang religious poetry under inspiration, with or without musical instruments (1 Sam. 10. 5-13, 19. 20-4, 2 Ki. 3. 11-15). In the late seventh century the prophet Jeremiah appears as a poet who composes and performs his work orally. In order for it to be disseminated more widely, he dictates it to his literate friend Baruch, who then reads it out to other audiences. When King Jehoiakim contemptuously burns the book in his brazier, Jeremiah dictates a new, expanded version of his prophecies.⁵⁸

THE DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Parlez-vous grec?

Cultural influence spreads between adjacent peoples by many channels. It will spread even if no one travels further than the next town; that next town always has other next towns further on. We should not think in terms of the modern nation state, ring-fenced by border controls and grudging with its residence and employment permits. The late David Lewis, discussing the sources of Greek knowledge of Persia in the fifth century, wrote of the 'strange presupposition that there was a political and linguistic iron curtain between Greeks and Persians', and of scholars' feeling that they had to 'look for very specific holes in this

⁵⁷ Implied for David's court in 2 Sam. 19. 35. Hezeqiah, king of Judah, sent male and female singers (*nārî nārân*) as tribute to Sennacherib in 701: Chicago Prism, iii 46 f. (Borger [as ch. 2, n. 19], j. 75; ANET 288). Cf. Eissfeldt (as ch. 2, n. 94), 98 f.

⁵⁸ Jer 36.

curtain through which Herodotus' information might have come'. He goes on to show from the Persepolis fortification tablets and other evidence that there were numbers of Greeks living and working in Persia in the time of Darius. They must have been able to communicate with those about them, whether in Persian, Aramaic, or Elamite.⁵⁹

People travel or live abroad for various reasons, some of which will be recalled in the following pages. If they stay abroad for any length of time, they pick up the local language, unless perhaps they are living in a sizeable enclave of fellow-nationals. Themistocles, having fled to Artaxerxes' realms, learned Persian, and he is not the only figure from fifth-century Greek history reputed to have had some acquaintance with that language.⁶⁰ There must have been far more who learned this or another oriental tongue in unrecorded circumstances, and, conversely, many an oriental who became fluent in Greek.

In many border regions—as in the modern world—familiarity with two languages must have been commonplace. In Sardis, we may suppose, both Greek and Lydian would have been widely understood, and in Kition both Greek and Phoenician. At times a particular language achieved the status of *lingua franca* over a larger area. We have already spoken of the wide currency of Akkadian in the second millennium and of Aramaic in the first. Between the ninth and seventh centuries Phoenician appears to have been a general second language in Cilicia and Cappadocia.⁶¹ To some extent Greek must have become something of a *lingua franca* in the eastern Mediterranean and Levant in the same period.

In areas where two languages are current, it is sometimes the case that there are poets who compose in both. This leads to transference of themes from one national tradition to another. To quote from a recent study of Turkic oral epic:

In particular in southern Uzbekistan, in Tajikistan, and in northern Afghanistan a number of singers are bilingual, a fact which accounts not only for the presence of Iranian influences in Turkic oral poetry but also for the popularity of originally Turkic epic poetry among speakers of Iranian languages.⁶²

Hence different versions of what is basically the same tale appear in different traditions. Analogous situations existed earlier this century in

⁵⁹ D. M. Lewis in *The Greek Historians: Literature and History. Papers presented to A. E. Raubitschek*, Stanford 1985, 104; cf. id., *Sparta and Persia*, Leiden 1977, 12-15.

⁶⁰ Thuc. 1. 138. 1; Histiaeus, Hdt. 6. 29; Alcibiades, Ath. 535e.

⁶¹ W. Röllig in Kopcke-Tokumaru, 97 f.

⁶² K. Reichl, *Turkic Oral Epic Poetry: Traditions, Forms, Poetic Structure*, New York & London 1992, 318.

mixed border areas in the Balkans, with poets who were bilingual in Serbo-Croat and Albanian, or Hungarian and Romanian. In western Europe in the Middle Ages there was considerable mobility of subject matter across linguistic boundaries, and in certain cases, at least, there is reason to suspect the involvement of bilingual poets.⁶³ This may equally have been a factor in some parts of the east Mediterranean area in antiquity.

When those needing to communicate did not have a common language, interpreters were often available. In Mesopotamia their existence as persons of status is attested from very early times; there are at least eleven references from before 2000.⁶⁴ In the early second millennium they were to be found among the Assyrian merchants in Cappadocia. An Old Babylonian tablet from Mari records consignments of tin sent to a Cretan and to the interpreter (of the) chief Cretan [mercha]nt in Ugarit.⁶⁵ Interpreters accompanied at least some of the envoys who travelled between the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Mitannian courts in the Amarna age.⁶⁶ The Neo-Assyrian kings were well provided with the bilingual scribes and interpreters needed to administer an empire in which many languages were spoken. When Gyges sent the first envoy from Lydia to appeal for help against the Cimmerian menace, between about 668 and 665, Assurbanipal was taken aback to find himself caught short linguistically:

The tongues of the rising sun (and) the setting sun, with which Aššur had filled my hands—there was no master of his tongue; [his] tongue was alien, and they could not understand his speech.⁶⁷

A Greek-speaker would surely not have caused such bafflement; Greek would have been among the languages for which an interpreter could have been found. Psammetichus, according to Herodotus, provided Egyptian boys to be trained as interpreters for the Greek settlers in the Delta, thus establishing a profession that still flourished in the historian's own day. The same writer has a number of references to the use of interpreters in the Persian empire, including some for communication

with Greeks. The passages may not be historically reliable, but at least they bear witness to Herodotus' assumptions and expectations.⁶⁸

Trading settlements; migrant workers

When it is asked what kind of contacts between Greeks and other nations might account for the westward transmission of mythological and literary motifs, most people instinctively think first of trade links, and especially of trade links with Phoenicians, which are not only well documented archaeologically but also vividly reflected in the *Odyssey*. Trade is no doubt an important factor, but much depends on the circumstances. The sale or exchange of goods need not in itself involve much meeting of minds.

The potential for cultural interaction is much increased by the establishment of a fixed trading settlement in a foreign land, or by individual craftsmen or merchants taking up residence abroad. At the beginning of the second millennium Assyrian trading colonies in Anatolia did much to spread the influence of Mesopotamian culture in that region. At Ugarit in the later fourteenth and thirteenth centuries the quantity of Mycenaean artefacts, including cult idols, has been taken to imply not just commerce with the Aegean but some measure of Greek residence, even 'une véritable colonisation mycénien'.⁶⁹ From the ninth century onward there is archaeological evidence for small Phoenician settlements and workshops maintained, at least for limited periods, in Greek lands: in Crete, the Dodecanese, Euboea, and Athens.⁷⁰ At Thebes—easily accessible from Euboea—a Phoenician presence is suggested by the 'Kadmean' element in the mythology of that city (above, pp. 448–50) but has yet to be confirmed by material evidence. By the Classical period there was a Phoenician Astarte cult at Corinth, with sacred prostitution, and a Phoenician enclave at the Piraeus.⁷¹ The Greeks for their part may have established some sort of presence at

⁶⁸ Hdt. 2. 154. 2, cf. 125. 6, 164. 1; 1. 86. 4, 3. 19. 1, 38. 4, 140. 3; also between Scythians and their neighbours, 4. 24. Cf. P. R. Franke in C. W. Müller, K. Sier, and J. Werner (edd.), *Zum Umgang mit fremden Sprachen in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Palingenesia, 36), Stuttgart 1992, 85–96, at 87 f.

⁶⁹ C. F.-A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica* i, Paris 1939, 99.

⁷⁰ J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 56, 70, 100, 103, 287–90, 358–60; id. in *Phinizier im Westen* (Madrider Beiträge, 8), Mainz 1982, 266–72; J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*, new ed., London 1980, 56–62, and in H. Hoffmann (ed.), *Dädalische Kunst auf Kreta im 7. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 1970, 14–25; J. W. Shaw, *AJA* 93, 1989, 165–83; G. Kopcke in Kopcke–Tokumaru, 106; Burkert (1992), 20–3 with literature; H. Matthäus (as ch. 1, n. 122), 168–70, A. M. Snodgrass in *Tsetskhladze–De Angelis*, 3; M. Popham, *ibid.* 22; D. Ridgway, *ibid.* 36; Cline, 52 f. with other references.

⁷¹ Pind. fr. 122; Burkert (1985), 408 n. 9; above, p. 56 n. 237; Phoenician inscriptions from Athens and Piraeus from about 400 to 96 BC, *KAI* 53–60, cf. *SSI* iii. 147.

⁶³ Cf. L. P. Harvey in A. T. Hatto (ed.), *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* i, London 1980, 146.

⁶⁴ I. J. Gelb, *Glossa* 2, 1968, 93–104.

⁶⁵ G. Dossin *RA* 64, 1970, 98, 28 f.; M. C. Astour in H. A. Hoffner (ed.), *Orient and Occident*, Neukirchen 1973, 21; Cline, 126 (text D2).

⁶⁶ *EA* 1.1, 5–10, 21, 24–9. Joseph's brothers too find an interpreter in Egypt, Gen. 42, 23.

⁶⁷ Cylinder E, v 9–13 (A. C. Piepkorn, *Historical Prism Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal* i, Chicago 1933, 16 f.).

trading stations in north Syria, at Al Mina, Tell Sukas, and one or two other sites, in the eighth century or even a little earlier, though one must now be much more cautious in asserting this than was the custom a few years ago.⁷² From sometime in the second half of the seventh century there was a substantial Greek settlement at Naukratis in the Nile Delta, by Herodotus' time there were others, and the number of Greeks living in Egypt was considerable.⁷³

It was not only in Greece or in the East that Greeks and orientals might find themselves living side by side. It could also come about in the western Mediterranean. The best evidence comes from Pithekoussai (Ischia), where Phoenician and Aramaic graffiti occur together with Greek.⁷⁴ David Ridgway infers that

By then [the last decade of the eighth century] ... a few Phoenicians and a lot of Euboeans had been living together at Pithekoussai for at least a generation. Their circumstances provided an ideal context for the continuation in the West of exactly the kind of 'intimate cultural contacts' that for Burkert [(1992), 21] had been taking place in Greece since the end of the ninth century. ... At the very least, in sum, we are surely justified in concluding that the relationship between Phoenicians and Euboeans at Pithekoussai went deeper than mere bargaining between resident Euboeans and itinerant Phoenician trinket-vendors.⁷⁵

Phoenician and Euboean pottery has also been found together at more than one site in Sardinia, while in Sicily Phoenician and Greek settlers evidently enjoyed close relations from an early date.⁷⁶

In some cases there were incentives for orientals to go and live not just in the neighbourhood of a Greek community but actually within it. This would apply above all to individuals or small guilds with some special skill for which there was a potential or actual demand. What can be identified archaeologically is the appearance of foreign manufacturing techniques of a kind that could only have been introduced by experts, not simulated merely by examining imported objects and trying to reproduce them. techniques such as those of iron-working or of gold filigree, granulation, and inlay (p. 11). But there were various other kinds of saleable expertise that have left no material traces. More than one scholar has cited in this connection the well-known lines from the

⁷² See Snodgrass in Tsatsikhladze-De Angelis, 4 f.

⁷³ Braun, 32-48.

⁷⁴ P. K. McCarter, *AJA* 79, 1975, 140 f.; G. Garbini, *Parola del Passato* 33, 1978, 143-50; A. J. Graham, *CAH* iii(3), 101.

⁷⁵ D. Ridgway in Tsatsikhladze-De Angelis, 39.

⁷⁶ Ridgway, *ibid.* 40 f.; Graham, *CAH* iii(3), 186 f.

Odyssey in which Eumaeus specifies the kinds of outsider that one willingly invites into the community:

'For who goes and invites a stranger from elsewhere,
apart from those who are *démioergoi*,
a seer, or a healer of ills, or a carpenter,
or indeed a singer who could give pleasure by his singing?
These are the people who get invited across the boundless earth.'⁷⁷

Already in the Bronze Age such people were accustomed to travelling from country to country, whether on their own initiative or by royal command. Kings in the Near East sent to one another for expert seers or healers, builders or craftsmen.⁷⁸ A smith from Cyprus, it will be recalled (p. 7), perished in the Cape Gelidonya shipwreck while on a journey to the Aegean with his working equipment.

Singers interest us especially. We hear of a female Egyptian singer in the royal household at Byblos in the eleventh century, and Hezeqiah's sending of Judaeans singers or singer-musicians of both sexes as part of his tribute to Sennacherib in 701 has been mentioned above. Sargon, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal all brought musicians back from their campaigns; Assyrian documents attest the presence in the country of singers from Babylon, Hatti, Arpad, Aram, and Tyre.⁷⁹

In the freer conditions of the Greek world skilled émigrés might make their own way from town to town, doing their best to acquire a reputation. Burkert (1992) has emphasized the possibility that itinerant seers and purification-priests in particular may have played an important role in mediating oriental wisdom to the West, not only ritual and divinatory techniques but also elements of mythological lore.

Greek expansion eastward. Crete. Cyprus

He also invokes a particular historical factor tending to promote westward migration in the eighth and seventh centuries: the expansion of the Assyrian empire to the Mediterranean, with all the destruction, dispossession, and social upheaval that that process entailed. It certainly represents a major historical development that must have had significant effects in relation to the question before us. We are, after all, especially interested in the transmission of Mesopotamian culture to the Aegean. But if this westward expansion resulted in a meeting of the Assyrian

⁷⁷ *Od.* 17. 382-6; Gordon (1962), 37-42; Helck, 226-8; Burkert (1992), 6, 23, 41; H. Matthäus (as ch. 1, n. 122), 169.

⁷⁸ Helck, 226 f.; Crowley, 249, 256, 263.

⁷⁹ Story of Wenamun (*ANET* 29; Lichtheim, ii. 229); above, n. 57; Oded, 101.

world with the Greek, we should remember that it would hardly have done so had the Greeks not previously extended themselves into the eastern Mediterranean.

The Achaean subjection of Cnossos in the fifteenth century may already have had the effect of opening Greece to some oriental influences, by putting her in closer touch with a more refined civilization which was itself in nearer contact with Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt. The Mycenaean took over the lyre from the Minoans, and the Minoan style fresco from Pylos depicting a lyre-player may suggest that they took it over as an instrument of palace entertainment. The Minoan singers probably continued to perform at least until Greeks mastered the art sufficiently to take their place. They must have been bilingual, and it is quite possible that they translated their Minoan songs, epic lays, or whatever, into Greek for their new masters.⁸⁰ Of course, we have no idea of the style or content of Minoan poetry or of the extent to which it had features in common with the West Asiatic traditions. But it may be that that was one channel by which orientalizing elements found their way into Greek poetry. Old Cretan heroes such as Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Idomeneus may have entered Greek tradition in this way; we have seen that some of the myths about them have oriental affinities (pp. 420, 442, 452). There is also Meriones, whose name may be identical with *maryannu*, a Hurrian word (from an Indo-Aryan root) that spread all over the Near East in the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries as the designation of the élite chariot warrior.⁸¹

The final phase of the Bronze Age was marked by much eastward movement, in part aggressive and predatory, from the Aegean towards the Levant. The causes are unclear; it may have been a response to famine, economic breakdown, or population pressures transmitted from the Balkans. In the twelfth and (perhaps more especially) the eleventh century it involved extensive Greek immigration into Cyprus, and also some settlement in Pamphylia.

Of all the known migratory movements in the Aegean area in the later Bronze and early Iron Ages, this colonization of Cyprus was, I believe, much the most significant for the purposes of this inquiry. It brought Greeks into immediate proximity with the Luwian and Phoenician states of Cilicia and north Syria, which, although in temporary disarray following the collapse of the Hittite empire and the ravages of other migrants (the 'Sea Peoples'), maintained a rich heritage of Canaanite and perhaps Hurro-Hittite poetic and mythic traditions. In

the island itself the immigrants will have found speakers not only of 'Eteo-cyprian' (whatever that was) but also of Hurrian and perhaps of Luwian and Ugaritic. In the Amarna age, not so long before, Cyprus had lain within the orbit of cuneiform culture and used the Akkadian *lingua franca* to communicate with the rest of the Near East. That implies that it had had scribes who had copied the Gilgamesh epic and other Mesopotamian classics in the course of their education.

The Greek Cypriots were well set up to siphon elements of oriental culture back to the Aegean. One of the 'laws of migration' formulated by a nineteenth-century sociologist states that 'each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current'. More recently this thesis has been elaborated as follows:

A counterstream is established for several reasons. One is that positive factors at origin may disappear, or be muted, as during a depression, or there may be a re-evaluation of the balance of positive and negative factors at origin and destination. The very existence of a migration stream creates contacts between origin and destination, and the acquisition of new attributes at destination, be they skills or wealth, often makes it possible to return to the origin on advantageous terms. Migrants become aware of opportunities at origin which were not previously exploited, or they may use their contacts in the new area to set up business in the old. Accompanying the returning migrants will be their children born at destination, and along with them will be people indigenous to the area of destination who have become aware of opportunities or amenities at the place of origin through stream migrants.⁸²

Not all of these factors will have been applicable in the case of Cyprus, but certainly there was some backwash from the island to Greece, particularly to Athens, where a group of Cypriots seem to have settled in the mid eleventh century. Attic Protogeometric pottery shows the influence of Cypriot pottery, and the art of iron-working took root in Greece.⁸³ Very likely the returning Greeks had brought some Levantine smiths with them, which would be a development entirely in accord with the sociologist's model just quoted. These immigrants may also have brought other, less material elements of oriental culture.

The establishment of a Tyrian colony at Kiton in the ninth century (if not earlier) gave the Greek Cypriots more immediate Phoenician neighbours, and exposed them more directly and continuously to

⁸⁰ Suggested by A. Severyns and J. Lénarbe, *La Table ronde*, Déc. 1958, 70.

⁸¹ F. Schachermeyr, *Atti e Memorie del I Congresso Internazionale di Micenologia*, Rome 1968, 306.

⁸² E. G. Ravenstein, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 48.2, June 1885, 199; E. S. Lee in J. A. Jackson (ed.), *Migration*, Cambridge 1969, 293 f.

⁸³ V. R. d'A. Desborough, *The Greek Dark Ages*, London 1972, 340 f.; V. Karageorghis, *CAH* iii(1), 517 f.

Phoenician cultural influences.⁸⁴ In the Archaic period Cyprus remained an island of mainly Greek kingdoms in a Levantine setting. Its role in mediating oriental culture to Greece must have been significant.

Assyrian expansion westward. Deportations

From as early as the third millennium, Mesopotamian kings had occasionally campaigned as far as the western sea and boasted of washing their weapons in it.⁸⁵ Before the rise of the Assyrian empire in the ninth century, however, there was no serious attempt to hold and administer the conquered territories. The procedure was to march out in a particular direction, frightening local kings (and if necessary smashing up their cities) so that they grovelled and undertook to pay tribute, and then to go home. Sooner or later the subject kings' fear would fade and they would cease to send tribute, after which the process might start over again whenever the conqueror had the time, inclination, and resources. These transitory episodes illustrate the vulnerability of Syria to Babylonian and Assyrian incursion, but probably had little cultural impact. It was not as a result of conquest, after all, but of commerce and other peaceful processes, that Mesopotamian influences permeated the Hurrian and Hittite kingdoms. The Hittites, indeed, exposed themselves the more to these influences by extending their own power southward and eastward, as Rome was one day to become more Hellenized by conquering Greece.

The expansion of the Assyrian empire to the Mediterranean began under Assurnasirpal II (883–859) and Shalmaneser III (858–824). Assurnasirpal reached the sea, encountering little opposition, and received tribute from the Phoenician coastal cities as well as from kings in the Amanus region and Commagene. Shalmaneser campaigned in the same parts on a number of occasions, and between 839 and 833 he repeatedly invaded Cilicia. The following reigns were less forceful, but Tiglath-pileser III (744–727) and his successors renewed the *Drang nach Westen* in earnest.

To secure their conquests, moreover, they adopted a new policy which must have made Assyrian influence in the subject lands a much more palpable reality than before. The inhabitants were deported in great numbers to other parts of the empire, where they were employed in major building projects or resettled in place of rebellious native elements, while

⁸⁴ Phoenician pottery appears in Cyprus from the eleventh century, and infant burials are found in tenth-century Phoenician jars (Reyes, 18). There is no clear separation of Greek from Phoenician spheres of influence (*ibid.* 147 f.).

⁸⁵ A. Malamat, *Studies in Honor of B. Landsberger* (*Assyriological Studies* 16, 1965), 369–71; C. J. Gadd, *CAH* i(2), 424–43.

dissident groups from the homeland were sent to take their place. These resettlements were on a large scale. It has been calculated that in the course of the Neo-Assyrian period between four and five million people were transplanted.⁸⁶

One effect was to establish close to the Mediterranean coast enclaves of different peoples from further east. Tiglath-pileser brought Assyrian and Babylonian tribes to Phoenicia. Sargon removed 27,290 Israelites from Samaria and imported Arabs; Babylonians and Elamites followed later, under Assurbanipal.⁸⁷ When the Syrian city of Hamath fell in 720, the native population was pressed into service in the Assyrian army and 6,300 Assyrians were installed in their place. In 717 Carchemish suffered similar treatment, and a few years later so did Cilicia.⁸⁸ Esarhaddon built a new city near Sidon, called Kar-Esarhaddon, and populated it with people from the mountains to the east of Assyria and from the Gulf area.⁸⁹ As a result of all this it was increasingly the case that sizeable groups of Assyrians and Babylonians were to be found in north Syria and Cilicia, not far from areas where Greeks lived or did business. Many of them will have been discontented with their lot, and some no doubt found opportunities to 'defect' to the West.

The prevailing current of the deportations, however, was always inward, towards Assyria. Large numbers of people from different countries were brought to the big cities such as Aššur, Calah, and Nineveh. Many were set to work at Sargon's great new city of Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad); he records how he brought people from all over the empire, of various languages, settled them at Dur-Sharrukin, and set educated Assyrians over them as overseers and foremen.⁹⁰ All this ethnic scrambling must have done much to promote the use of Aramaic as a *lingua franca*, and to bring local cultures from different countries into mutual contact.

It is in the second half of the eighth century that contacts between Greeks and Assyrians are first documented. Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, the Assyrian governor of Tyre and Sidon, reported to Tiglath-pileser (or perhaps Sargon) sometime after 738 that 'the Iauwaya have come; they have made an attack on Samsimuruna, Harisu, and ...' (in what follows

⁸⁶ Oded, 19–21.

⁸⁷ Oded, 27 f.; Lie, 4, 15 f., 22, 121–3; 2 Ki. 17, 6, 24; Ezra 4, 9 f.; cf. S. Dalley, *Iraq* 47, 1985, 34 f.

⁸⁸ J. D. Hawkins in *CAH* iii(1), 416–19, 424–6.

⁸⁹ Borger, 48, 10 f. (*ANET* 290).

⁹⁰ Oded, 30 f.; Fuchs, 43 f., lines 72–4.

there is a mention of ships).⁹¹ These 'Ionians'—the regular designation of Greeks among all the eastern nations—probably came from Cyprus, or perhaps the Anatolian coast. By 707 Sargon could claim that seven kings in Cyprus (Iadnana) were sending him tribute.⁹² In inscriptions from Khorsabad and elsewhere he boasts of having caught like fish the Iamnaya who live in the midst of the sea.⁹³

The situation remained similar under his son and grandson. In 696 or thereabouts Sennacherib's forces fought a naval battle against Greeks in Cilicia.⁹⁴ Esarhaddon claimed to receive homage and tribute from 'all the kings in the midst of the sea, from Iadnana the land of the Iaman to Tarshish'. Another text records that he sent to many kings of the West for building materials for his palace at Nineveh; the list includes ten kings in Cyprus, some of whom have clearly Greek names.⁹⁵

These Cypriot kings evidently acknowledged Assyrian suzerainty, but there is no reason to think that any of their lands had actually been invaded, their peoples deported, or Assyrian settlers imposed.⁹⁶ Greeks and Assyrians do not appear to have been forced into mass consortia by that particular mechanism. Their episodic clashes may nevertheless have done something to effect contacts. One does not absorb much cultural influence from the enemy on the battlefield. But whenever a platoon of Greek soldiers was captured, they would either have been drafted into the Assyrian army or carried off to the east, very likely to be used as extra labour on projects such as palace-building at Khorsabad or Nineveh. For an extended period they would find themselves living in close contact with orientals from various countries, perhaps in the Assyrian capital. Some of them will eventually have found their way home again; it was not unknown for deportees to be repatriated.⁹⁷ It might also have happened that orientals of various provenance were captured and held as slaves on Cyprus, or arrived there as refugees.

⁹¹ H. W. Saggs, *Iraq* 25, 1963, 76–8; H. J. Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, Jerusalem 1973, 232; Braun, 15; J. A. Brinkman in R. F. Sutton (ed.), *Daidalikon. Studies in Memory of Raymond V. Schoder*, Wauconda 1989, 55.

⁹² Fuchs, 175, 394, 232, 145; Braun, 17; Reyes, 51.

⁹³ Fuchs, 34, 21, 64, 25, 76, 15, 262, 34 f.; Brinkman, op. cit., 55 f. The man called Yamani recorded as the ruler of Ashdod in 711 is not to be understood as a Greek; see H. Tadmor, *JCS* 12, 1958, 80 n. 217, and Brinkman, 56 n. 14.

⁹⁴ Berossus and Abydenus, *FGH Hist* 680 F 7c § 31, 685 F 5 § 6; Luckenbill, 61 f.; Braun, 17–19.

⁹⁵ Borger, 86 § 57 obv. 10; 60, 54 ff.; cf. Braun, 19 f.; V. Karageorghis, *CAH* iii(3), 57–9.

⁹⁶ Cf. Reyes, 52–68. Herodotus (2. 182. 2) knows nothing of a conquest of Cyprus before Amasis.

⁹⁷ Oded, 63.

Mercenaries

Conscription of deportees was one way in which the Assyrian army was augmented with foreign manpower. Another was recruitment from vassal states as a form of tribute. A third was the employment of mercenaries.⁹⁸ This suggests a further potential channel by which oriental culture might be absorbed by westerners. Greeks often fought abroad as mercenaries in the Archaic period, as they may have done already in the Mycenaean age.⁹⁹ A Phoenician silver bowl from Amathus in Cyprus, dating from the period 710–675, shows a Phoenician city under attack from a mixed army of Greek infantry, Assyrian archers, and ladder-makers of Egyptian appearance.¹⁰⁰ Sennacherib had Cypriot as well as Phoenician sailors in the fleet which he assembled on the Tigris for his expedition to the Persian Gulf in 694.¹⁰¹ The story of the welcome accorded to Greek and Carian mercenaries by Psammetichus I in the mid seventh century is well known from Herodotus. We find their successors fighting for the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605; carving their names (together with some Phoenicians) at Abu Simbel in Nubia in 591; defending Apries against the insurgent Amasis in 570; resisting Cambyses in 525.¹⁰² A pottery find on the coast of Palestine suggests that King Josiah of Judah (640–609) may have had a Greek contingent in his employ towards the end of his reign, while mentions of a group of about 38 *ktym* (= Kittiyim) in Hebrew ostraca from the fortress of Tell Arad, which fell to the Babylonians in 598/7, are understood as referring to Greek mercenaries serving in the Judaeen army.¹⁰³ It was at just about that time, and apparently in Palestine, that Alcæus' brother Antimeidas was fighting on the Babylonian side. When he returned to Lesbos, he brought a sword with an ivory hilt and gold trimmings, and a David and Goliath story of which the poet jokingly makes him the hero.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Oded, 50–4. On the significance of mercenaries for cultural transmission cf. Gordon (1962), 38–40; Burkert (1992), 25.

⁹⁹ Above, p. 6; cf. the speculations of F. H. Stubbings, *CAH* ii(1), 634. It may be as well to note here that the *Krētīm* who formed part of David's praetorian guard (2 Sam. 8. 18, al.) will not have been Greeks from Crete but members of a tribe from that island which had settled in coastal Palestine with the Philistines around 1200.

¹⁰⁰ See references at p. 390 n. 50.

¹⁰¹ Luckenbill, 73, 58 ff., 'boatmen from Tyre, Sidon, Iadnana'.

¹⁰² Hdt. 2. 152. 4–5 and other sources; Braun, 35–7, 49–52. From the Abu Simbel graffiti (A. Bernard and O. Masson, *RÉG* 70, 1957, 1–20; R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, Oxford 1969 [rev. 1988], no. 7) we learn that all the non-Egyptian troops were under one commander.

¹⁰³ T. C. Mitchell, *CAH* iii(2), 387, 399; Braun, 22; *SSI* i. 49–54; Y. Aharoni, *Tell Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1981; J. Renz and W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik* i, Darmstadt 1995, 353 ff.; for the calculation of the number of Kittiyim see *ibid.* 376 f. The term originally denoted the inhabitants of Kition but came to be used more loosely.

¹⁰⁴ Alc. 350; cf. D. L. Page, *Sappho and Alcæus*, Oxford 1955, 223 f. The giant's height is

Mercenary contingents no doubt tended to keep together rather than mixing at random with the troops of the host nation, but they can scarcely have avoided learning a certain amount about other peoples and their cultures in the course of a campaigning season. In the winter they might be laid off (as Herodotus tells us that Croesus sent his mercenary forces away for the winter months), to return home with their trophies and their experiences.¹⁰⁵ In some instances, no doubt, they returned with a foreign woman, minded now to 'make love, not war'.

Domestic intercourse

Mixed marriages must be among the most potent of engines for cultural exchange, not only because of what the couple may learn from each other in the course of a long union but even more, perhaps, because of what the children may learn. In most cases it is the mother who changes countries and who is the immigrant with a different cultural background. Children in their early years were in the mother's care, or in that of a nurse who might equally be of foreign extraction with a second language. In the earliest reference to bilingualism in Greek literature, in the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess pretends to be a Phrygian princess who is able to speak to Anchises in his language because she was brought up by a Trojan nurse. Herodotus recounts a legend according to which the Pelasgians of Lemnos carried off Attic women from Brauron, and the children they had by them learned Attic speech and manners from their mothers.¹⁰⁶ To the poet of the *Odyssey* the idea of Egyptian or Phoenician women being carried off by Greek raiders comes naturally,¹⁰⁷ and certainly the Greeks of the Classical period had many foreign slaves of both sexes. It is perhaps not too fanciful to imagine a Greek child demanding a story from his Phoenician nurse and being told one that she remembered from her own childhood rather than a Greek myth. The domestic setting also provided other opportunities for the transmission of exotic tales, for example when foreign and Greek women worked side by side at some tedious task such as weaving or making bread.

given as five royal cubits less one palm, exactly the same as that of the Persian hero Artachaias in Hdt. 7. 117. 1. Goliath was six cubits and a span (1 Sam. 17. 4).

¹⁰⁵ Hdt. 1. 77. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Hymn. Aphr.* 113–16; Hdt. 6. 138. 1–2. For bilingual slaves cf. Xen. *Anab.* 4. 8. 4. Wirth, 198 f., suggested that Homer might have been of mixed Greek and Phoenician parentage, and sufficiently familiar with Phoenician to hobnob with Phoenician merchants and hear from them tales of the orient, including material from the Gilgamesh epic and other works of Babylonian literature.

¹⁰⁷ *Od.* 14. 264 = 17. 433; 15. 427.

It was common practice for the kingdoms of the Near East to make alliances and establish status by means of dynastic marriages, regardless of linguistic boundaries.¹⁰⁸ Mesopotamian and Elamite royal houses allied themselves in this way in the Ur III and Kassite periods.¹⁰⁹ In the course of the fourteenth century streams of princesses from Mitanni, Babylon, and Anatolia were dispatched to Egyptian Thebes as consorts for pharaohs. Tutankhamun's widow asked for a son of the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I to marry her. One of Suppiluliuma's wives was a Babylonian princess. A Kassite king who asked the pharaoh for one of his daughters was told that pharaohs never gave their daughters abroad; but such was the prestige involved that he pleaded:

[Someone's] grown daughters, beautiful women, (certainly) exist. Send me 1 beautiful woman as if [you]r daughter. Who is going to say, "That's no daughter of the king?"¹¹⁰

In the thirteenth century Ramesses II married a daughter of Hattusili III; in the tenth, Solomon—more favoured than the Kassite—married a pharaoh's daughter; in the eighth, Midas married the daughter of a minor Greek king; in the seventh, the Scythian Bartatua (Protothyas) applied to Esarhaddon for an Assyrian princess, and rulers of Neo-Hittite states sent their daughters to Nineveh; in the sixth, Astyages the Mede married a daughter of the Lydian king, and Nebuchadnezzar the daughter of a Median chief. In all these cases it is to be supposed that the brides were accompanied by a retinue of attendants, people with whom she could continue to converse in her own language at the foreign court; perhaps musicians who could sing the songs of her native country. A palpable effect in terms of cultural influence on the receiving country is to be seen in the case of two Hittite kings, Suppiluliuma I and Hattusili III, who married Hurrian ladies from Kizzuwatna (Cilicia): this resulted, especially in the second instance, in a marked Hurrianization of Hittite cult and mythology.¹¹¹

It is doubtful whether such political marriages ever introduced many foreign princesses to Greece. However, a Mycenaean court may occasionally have received a woman from Crete or from further east together with her little cargo of oriental culture. Even in the later period

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Crowley, 265 f.; P. Karavites (as ch. 1, n. 72), 194 f.

¹⁰⁹ F. Vallat, *CANE* ii. 1029.

¹¹⁰ *EA* 4. 11–13. The Amarna letters are an informative source on these royal alliances, cf. nos. 1, 3, 4, 11, 17, 19–22, 24, 29, 31, 32; *CAH* ii(1). 321, 339, 345 f.

¹¹¹ M. S. Drower, *CAH* ii(1). 521; Gurney (1977), 13, 17; P. H. J. Houwink ten Cate, *CANE* i. 268.

we can still imagine a Greek king in Cyprus allying himself in this way with a Levantine one, though there is no record of it.

What we can more confidently postulate, and even support with archaeological, literary, and onomatological evidence, is 'ordinary' intermarriage between Greeks and non-Greeks. There is no doubt that Greek colonists in foreign territories sometimes married local women. In certain cases, as at Pithecusa and Cyrene, it appears that the first settlers did not take families with them but looked for wives on arrival.¹¹² A Phoenician goldsmith who immigrated to Cnossos in the ninth century is inferred to have married into a local family from the fact that he and four generations of his descendants were buried in a recommissioned tholos tomb dating from Minoan times, which 'would have been a most unlikely privilege ... for a foreigner with no roots in the Knossian community'.¹¹³ A fifth-century gravestone on Chios not only names the deceased, Heropythus, but gives his ancestry for thirteen generations back: all the names are Greek except for the most distant forefather, who is 'Eldios (or perhaps rather Heldios) the Cyprian'.¹¹⁴ This looks like a Semitic name, identical with the name Eldy found on ostraca from Arad and borne by one of David's heroes in the First Book of Chronicles.¹¹⁵ Presumably Heldios, who must have lived around 900 BC, married a Greek woman, and either he or one of his descendants moved west to a more thoroughly Greek environment.

More than one well-known Greek of the Archaic period is credited with a father whose name is foreign. Thales of Miletus is the son of Examyas, a Carian name, and moreover is said by Herodotus and others to have been ultimately of Phoenician lineage; his cosmology does in fact show specifically Phoenician features.¹¹⁶ Pherecydes of Syros is the son of Babys, which is again an Anatolian name. He too introduced exotic eastern motifs into Greek mythical philosophy. Family tradition may or may not underlie these men's contributions. In any case their parentage, like the case of Heldios, serves to confirm that intermarriage and the Hellenization of orientals are not merely theoretical possibilities but historically attested phenomena in Archaic Greece. The known instances

can be no more than a tiny fraction of the actual number, which must have run into hundreds or thousands.

Oriental immigrants in Greece

Archaeological data from certain sites may give indications of oriental sojourners in Mycenaean Greece. The Levantine-type shrines at Phylakopi and Mycene described on p. 37 suggest a more than transient presence of foreigners. At Tiryns a number of LH III vessels of local manufacture had Cypro-Minoan marks incised on them after firing, and a quantity of Cypriot non-luxury goods (pottery and terracotta wall brackets) have been found there in LH IIIB contexts. These may indicate resident Cypriots.¹¹⁷

The Linear B archives seem to provide further evidence. Among the proper names on the Cnossos tablets is an *a₃-ku-pi-ti-yo*, who is pretty clearly Aigyptios (the sign conventionally transcribed as *a₃* represents *ai*), and a *mi-sa-ra-yo*, which looks very like a Semitic equivalent of the same (Ug. and Phoen. *msr* (y) 'Egyptian', Heb. *misrî* 'Egyptian', *misráyim* 'Egypt', etc.). At Pylos there was an *a₃-ti-yo-qo* = Aithioq^{wo}s 'Ethiopian', and in both places a *tu-ri-yo*, which might = 'Tyrian', though other interpretations are no less possible.¹¹⁸ Another Aigyptios makes his appearance in the *Odyssey* (2. 15), not as a wandering alien but as an aged Ithacan of long standing. A man might possibly be given such a name 'because his mother was an Egyptian carried off in a raid, or because his father wished to commemorate some friendly relation with Egypt, or perhaps, as Bérard suggests, because he himself had made the voyage'.¹¹⁹ But the usual reason for giving someone an ethnic as a name is that he hails from the country in question. Dominico Theotokopoulou was commonly known in Italy as El Greco because he came from Crete, and modern surnames such as Breton (Britten), Fleming, Frank, French, German, Hollander, Norman, Scott, in most cases commemorate the provenance of some ancestor.

In the Archaic and early Classical age various ethnics are found as personal names, especially at Athens, which supplies a large part of the evidence besides having a comparatively large number of foreign slaves and metics. Just among potters and painters we find a Lydos, a Skythes, a Sikanos, a Sikelos, a Kolchos, a Thrax, and a Syriskos, of whom the last, despite having a Greek name in addition (Pistoxenos), presumably

¹¹² L. H. Jeffery, *Archaic Greece*, London 1976, 57; A. J. Graham, *CAH* iii(3), 147 f.; J. N. Coldstream, 'Mixed marriages at the frontiers of the Greek world', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 12, 1993, 89–107.

¹¹³ Coldstream, *op. cit.*, 100.

¹¹⁴ L. H. Jeffery (as ch. 1, n. 102), 344/414 no. 47.

¹¹⁵ J. Renz, *Die alt-hebräischen Inschriften*, 1 300 no. 39, 10, 395 no. 27, 5; read as Helay and interpreted as 'Mole', *ibid.* ii/1, 66 f.; 1 Chr. 27, 15 Helay = 11, 30 Hēled. Alternatively Eldios might be *El-day(i), 'El is sufficient (for me)'; cf. the Yah-day of 1 Chr. 2, 47.

¹¹⁶ M. L. West, *CQ* 44, 1994, 305 f.

¹¹⁷ Cline, 54.

¹¹⁸ Astour, 340–4 (followed by D. R. West, *Some Cults* [as ch. 1, n. 235], 29–36), offers a list of possible Semitic and Hurrian names in the tablets.

¹¹⁹ H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments*, 99.

came from the Levant, or had at least one parent who did.¹²⁰ Another, Amasis, has an Egyptian name. Here, apparently, are men of oriental stock who were sufficiently assimilated to their Greek environment to compete with indigenous artists in producing work in the indigenous tradition and style.

Could the same have happened with poets? At first sight this might seem less probable. Mastery of a foreign language to the requisite degree would be more difficult, we should think, than the acquisition of potting or painting skills. Yet most of us have met foreigners who have amazed us with their facility in speaking and writing our language and their command of its idiom; and it is not hard to cite some who have made notable contributions to English literature, such as Conrad (who did not learn English until his late teens) or Nabokov. In antiquity we can point to various Greek prose authors whose first language was probably a barbarian one, such as Xanthos of Sardis and the Babylonian priest Berossos, and at least a couple who also composed verse, such as the Syrians Meleager and Lucian. Major figures in early Latin poetry were the Greek Livius Andronicus and the Oscans Ennius and Pacuvius; a lesser contributor from the Levant was Publilius Syrus.

What of the Archaic period? We cannot take seriously the tendentious Hellenistic mavericks who maintained that Homer was a Syrian or an Egyptian.¹²¹ His name, it is true, is not certainly Greek, and it has been taken as the Hellenization of a West Semitic *'ōmēr*, 'speaker, declarer'.¹²² The theory is not very plausible in this crude form, but it could be given an interesting twist. The probability is that 'Homer' was not the name of a historical Greek poet but the imaginary ancestor of the Homeridae; such guild-names in *-idai* and *-adai* are not normally based on the name of a historical person.¹²³ The question is then how the Homeridae got their name. Now, if the Cyprian Kinyradai—from whom a mythical Cinyras was abstracted—represent a Phoenician **b'nē kinnār* (above, p. 57), it is conceivable that the Homeridae correspond in the same way to a Phoenician prototype **b'nē 'ōmerīm*, 'sons of speakers', that is, tale-tellers as a professional class. One would have to assume

that they were originally at home in some mixed Graeco-Phoenician milieu such as Cyprus and that they, or a detachment of them, migrated at some stage to Chios, the attested seat of the Homeridae in the fifth century, just as Heldios' family did. This is, of course, only one of several hypotheses by which the name Homeridae might be accounted for.¹²⁴

A clearer case of an early Greek poet with a Semitic name is Ananios or Ananias, who wrote iambs similar to those of Hipponax and probably lived at about the same time, the late sixth century; at any rate he antedates Epicharmus, who cites him by name. Considered as Greek, the name would mean 'pain-free', and might be compared with that of the Sicyonian sculptor Alypos, who flourished around 400 BC. However, it does not seem to occur elsewhere as a Greek name. Where we find men called Ananias otherwise in Greek sources—in the Septuagint, the New Testament, Strabo, and Josephus—it is always as a rendering of the common Hebrew name *Hānanyāh* (or *-yāhū*), 'Yah(weh) is gracious', or of the less common one *'ānanyāh*, 'servant' of Yah(weh). The likelihood is that the iambographer had one or other of these names from birth and was a Jew, the earliest to be recorded in Greece. He was probably born during the Exile, perhaps in Babylonia or Egypt, unless his parents had already made their way to the Aegean.

As one of his examples of *skolia* Athenaeus quotes a swaggering soldier's song in two strophes, attributed to a Cretan called Hybrios or Hybrias.¹²⁵ The name might be thought a fictitious one, chosen for its appropriateness to the hybriatic attitude expressed in the song. However, Hesychius refers to a Cretan marching song composed by one Ibrios, evidently the same song and the same person.¹²⁷ 'Ibrios' is the *difficilior lectio*: the spelling in the Athenaeus manuscripts will be an assimilation to a recognizably Greek word. Ibrios is not Greek, and one thing it might represent is 'ibri', which is the Hebrew for 'Hebrew'. Was this another expatriate Jew, or the descendant of one?

Another figure who may be mentioned here was no poet (so far as we know) but reputedly a member of a poet's family. According to the *Suda*, Stesichorus had two brothers, a geometrician called Mamertinos and a law-maker called Helianax. These may have been real persons who were not in fact brothers of Stesichorus but were attached to him in

¹²⁰ J. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases. The Archaic Period*, London 1975, 9, 114.

¹²¹ Syrian: Meleager ap. Ath. 157b. Egyptian (from Thebes): 'others' in the *Vita Romana* p. 31. 7 Wilamowitz, *Vita Scorialensis* 2 p. 29. 10, Gell. 3. 11. 6, Clem. *Strom.* 1. 66. 1, cf. Heliod. *Aethiop.* 2. 34. 5, 3. 13. 3–15. 1. Lucian's revelation that Homer was actually a Babylonian, known at home as Tigranes (*VH* 2. 20), is of course intended as a joke.

¹²² G. Croese, *ΟΜΗΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΣ, Sive Historia Hebraeorum ab Homero Hebraicis nominibus ac sententiis conscripta in Odyssea & Iliade*, Dordraci 1704, 59: 'itaque Όμηρος mihi videtur nomen esse Hebraicum מְרַמֵּר OMER, orator, rhetor ... Vel relatus magis ad opus, ut ait "OMER, sermo, dictum, commentarius." Cf. the Onom. of Gen. 36. 11, al.

¹²³ Cf. M. Durante (as ch. 5, n. 29), 188–94.

¹²⁴ For another see Durante, op. cit., 194–202.

¹²⁵ Interpretation based on Ug. *am*; see Caquot–Szymer, 129 note q.

¹²⁶ PMG 909. Athenaeus' genitive form Όβριος is ambiguous; Eustathius assumed the nominative to be Όβριος. The age of the song is uncertain, but its metre may suggest the fifth century.

¹²⁷ Hesych. s. 128 s.v. Ιβυκτής.

the inventive biographical tradition (one branch of which made him the son of Hesiod). The first name is Italiote, the second obviously Greek, but problematic as to sense. It might be 'king of the assembly (*hālīā*)', rather like Anaxagoras. If on the other hand it is to be understood as 'Helios (is) king', it is of a quite abnormal type for a Greek name, yet impeccable as the rendering of a Semitic one. In fact it corresponds exactly to a name attested at Ugarit: Špš-mlk, 'Shapash (the Sun-god) is king'. Names of this pattern, such as Ugaritic Ršp-mlk, Phoenician Ba'al-malk, Hebrew 'Elī-mélek, are typical of West Semitic. Helianax may have been a bilingual Phoenician of the West, Šamš-malk, who lived among Greeks or did business with them and who translated his name into Greek for the purpose. Whether he had any dealings with Stesichorus must remain uncertain.

The rendering of a Semitic name into Greek has also been suspected in the case of the celebrated Samian architect and metal-worker Theodorus, who worked for Polycrates.¹²⁸ 'Gift of God' is a new type of name in Greece, but it resembles common West Semitic names such as Ugaritic B'l-ytn, Phoenician Ba'al-yātōn, 'Ešmūn-yātōn, 'Aštart-yātōn, or Hebrew Y'hō-nātān, Yō-nātān, 'El-nātān, 'Baal (etc.) has given'. It is true that there are Indo-Iranian names of the form Devadatta, Indradatta, Miθradāta; but the complete absence from Homer and Greek mythology of analogous formations (Diodorus, Herodotus, Hermodotus, and the like) militates against the assumption that they represent an inherited type. It is only in the fifth century that they become common in Greece.

CONCLUSIONS

The Greek poets' debts to Near Eastern traditions go far beyond what can be accounted for from casual commercial contacts, even over many centuries. They presuppose situations in which Greeks and peoples of the East lived side by side for extended periods and communicated fluently in a shared language.

We have seen that such situations did in fact arise at various times and from various causes, in Cyprus and the Levant, in Crete and Greece, and in the western Mediterranean. Greeks found themselves living next to or among orientals as colonists, traders, conquerors, exiles, prisoners of war, conscript soldiers, mercenaries, forced labour, or commissioned craftsmen. They found orientals in their own country as merchants, blacksmiths, jewellers, refugees, slaves, prostitutes, spouses, perhaps

¹²⁸ Brown, 303 f. Theodorus' father has a good Greek name, Telecles, but we do not know about his mother.

healers, diviners, and purification-priests. Some of them became completely naturalized, familiar with Greek poetry, and as able as any Greek to compose it.

Greece was never sealed off from the East, and received impulses from that direction at most periods. But the discussion has thrown three particular eras into relief.

The first is the high Mycenaean, between 1450 and 1200. Conditions in the Near East were relatively settled, with extensive international trade and a Great Kings' communications network maintained by scribes who were also carriers of Sumerian and Akkadian literary culture. The Mycenaeans, though not fully part of this world, digested some elements of Minoan civilization, which had its links with the East; they established themselves in Rhodes and Cos, their ships were active up and down the coasts of Asia Minor, and they had commercial connections with Cyprus and Ugarit. Goods and trinkets reached Greece from Syria, Babylonia, and Egypt. The name of Mycene was known to a fourteenth-century pharaoh. The influence of the Near East is apparent in many aspects of the material culture of Mycenaean Greece, and reflected in the presence of several Semitic loan words in the Greek of the Linear B tablets.

The second period that has been highlighted is the final phase of the Bronze Age, between 1200 and 1050, which saw a substantial Greek colonization of Cyprus and some parts of the south Anatolian littoral. This established an important Greek presence in the eastern Mediterranean, in proximity to Neo-Hittite and Phoenician states (not to mention the native Cypriot culture, which must have been strongly Levantine in character); it also resulted in a reflux movement which brought some oriental techniques and their practitioners to mainland Greece.

The third period is that of the expansionist Assyrian empire, particularly from the time of Tiglath-pileser III. Aegean trade with the Levant was now becoming more intense. An important new factor was the Assyrian policy of deportation and resettlement, which for the first time established Assyrian and Babylonian populations in north Syria and Cilicia, and put Greeks at risk of being drafted into the Assyrian army or transported to a Mesopotamian city. Thus there were now greatly increased possibilities of direct contact between Greeks and Assyrians or Babylonians, and increased opportunities and incentives for the latter to migrate to the West. From the second half of the seventh century we have evidence for Greeks serving voluntarily as mercenaries in eastern armies, for Egyptian, Judaean, and Babylonian masters.

The Assyrian empire gave way to the Babylonian in 612 and to the Persian in 539. The presence of resident Greeks in the heart of these

oriental empires continues to be documented. Several Babylonian tablets from an archive listing oil rations delivered to dependants of the royal household in the period 595–570 refer to groups of seven or eight (three) (*iamanaya*) carpenters, besides various others of other nations.¹²⁹ From other administrative texts we know, as mentioned earlier, that there were numbers of Greeks living and working at Persepolis between 500 and 480. We have also seen evidence for a certain number of orientals settled in Greece. Against this historical background the continuing penetration of Near Eastern themes and motifs into Greek poetry of the sixth and early fifth centuries appears, if not fully explicable, at any rate no more mysterious than their reception at earlier epochs.

In the ocean of these 'literary' influences, two major thematic complexes have deservedly attracted especial interest: the Succession Myth, which finds its Greek representation in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and the Gilgamesh story, by which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are so strongly marked in their different ways. Let us conclude by considering these great epic themes once more, in the hope of formulating somewhat more specific hypotheses about their transmission from the orient to Greece than we have done hitherto.

The Succession Myth, notwithstanding the presence in it of certain Babylonian elements, appears to be essentially a Hurrian creation, adopted by the Hittites. Some of its features were also preserved in the Phoenician tradition that underlies Sanchuniathon. In modern discussions it is naturally the Hittite version that stands in the forefront, because we know little of the Hurrian, while Sanchuniathon comes to us contaminated by later material including Hesiod. But direct transmission from Hittite to Greek is unlikely. The Hittite tradition of the myth may have been confined to Hattusa; it was broken off shortly after 1200; and the Hittites' dealings with Greeks were in any case rather distant. More probably the line of transmission went either directly from Hurrian-speakers to Greeks or through north-west Semitic intermediaries. In either case it must have passed through northern Syria or Cilicia.

For the next station on the route, Cyprus is an obvious, almost unavoidable choice. In the Hesiodic narrative Aphrodite's first emergence on land at Cyprus (presumably at Paphos, though Hesiod does not specify) is bound up with the castration of Ouranos: this tends to confirm that the Succession Myth underwent modification there. Crete may be identified as a further staging-post, since the Cretan myth of Zeus' birth

¹²⁹ E. F. Weidner in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud* ii, Paris 1939, 932 f.; ANET 308 (c) 1; Brinkman (as n 91), 58 f. It is to be noted, however, that one tablet names three or perhaps four individual *iamanaya*, and the names are not recognizable as Greek. One of them, Kunzumpiya, seems to be Lycian.

in a holy cave near Lyktoz was incorporated in the story before it reached Hesiod. Delphi too had made its contribution, claiming to possess the stone that Kronos swallowed and regurgitated.¹³⁰

At what point on the route did the myth pass into Greek currency, and at what date are we to imagine that this happened? Phoenicians might have brought it as far as Crete, if not further;¹³¹ but the account of Aphrodite's birth, which relies on a Greek etymology of her name (from *aphros* 'foam') in order to make a connection between the castration and the genesis of the goddess in the sea, is surely a Greek Cypriot and not a Phoenician Cypriot contribution. This initial Hellenization of the myth in western Cyprus may have occurred at any time after the Greek settlement of the island in the twelfth and eleventh centuries. It need not have been transmitted further west until a later period. Connections with Crete became more active again in the ninth century, while the rise of Delphi as a national religious centre in the mid eighth century is the earliest likely time for its reception there. Nor can we go much later for the Delphic stage, given that Hesiod was active in the latter part of the eighth century or, at latest, in the early seventh.

For the Succession Myth, then, we can trace a probable path of transmission from Hurrian country to Hesiod, even if the timetable is imprecise. Other oriental material that we find in his work, such as the format of the wisdom poem, the Myth of Ages, the Babylonian-style hemerology, and so forth, no doubt reached him by various different routes. It cannot all have travelled together from the eastern Mediterranean as one consignment destined for Ascrea. The case of Hesiod makes us realize, with some awe, the richness and variety of oriental traditions accessible to a poet in central Greece around 700 BC.

The poets of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* drew from yet other wells. The Gilgamesh epic stands out as a major source of inspiration. We have seen that it was a version of the Gilgamesh epic similar to that current in seventh-century Nineveh, marked out by the addition of the incongruous Tablet XII. We need not assume that the Homeric poets 'knew' it as an Akkadian text, or in an Aramaic version; they may personally have known no language but Greek; yet they cannot have been separated from it at many removes. In the case of the *Iliad* there are other passages, unconnected with Gilgamesh, that strongly indicate some sort of 'hot line' from Assyrian court literature of the first quarter of the seventh century. It was observed at the beginning of the chapter that if the existence of such a 'hot line' is admitted, no further explanation need be

¹³⁰ West (1966), 29, 290–3; (1978), 30.

¹³¹ Phoenician transmission is advocated by A. Heubeck in Heitsch, 557–69 (with Rhodes as the likely meeting-place), and A. Lesky, *ibid.* 598–601.

sought for our poet's acquaintance with Gilgamesh and perhaps other Akkadian classics such as *Atrahasis*, which were stock items in the royal libraries.

In the course of the chapter we have identified processes which actually did take some Greeks to Nineveh on the king's service in 694 (p. 617) and may well have taken many more there in the following decades, whether as prisoners of war or as specialist craftsmen requisitioned from vassal states. Some at least will have understood Aramaic, if not Akkadian, and some at least will eventually have managed to return home, perhaps after a sojourn of several years. It is possible to imagine one of them—an amateur or professional rhapsode?—returning with some knowledge of the poetry favoured in court circles, and subsequently drawing upon it to enrich his Greek compositions, which then impressed others and were imitated.

The Greeks who went or were sent into Assyria will in most cases have been Cypriots. The hero of the above adventure is probably a Cypriot who returns to Cyprus and fertilizes the heroic poetry of Greek Cyprus. We know that the island was a home to epic poetry, at any rate by the sixth century, if that was when the *Cypria* came into being. Poets named Stasinus and Hegesias (or Hegesinus) of Salamis are touted as its author. The sixth Homeric Hymn, which celebrates Aphrodite as the queen of Cyprus, relates the story of her first arrival there and reception among the gods, and ends with a prayer for victory in 'this contest', may have been composed for a Cyprian festival.¹³² The poet of the *Iliad*, though unlikely to have been a Cypriot himself, may have visited the island or had some contact there. His description of Patroclus' funeral has parallels in the eighth- and seventh-century royal burials at Cyprian Salamis;¹³³ and at 11. 19–28, where he is describing the arming of Agamemnon, he makes the breastplate into an elaborately decorated piece of oriental metalwork and appends a story about Cinyras having sent it as a gift from Cyprus when he heard of the preparations for the Trojan expedition. There is no tradition behind this. Cinyras, the mythical eponym of the Paphian temple singers, the darling of Apollo and priest of Aphrodite, is not a man of arms and does not belong in the world of Agamemnon. The poet has introduced him gratuitously, presumably to humour Cypriot friends with the suggestion that although

poetic tradition allowed their ancient king no part in the Trojan War, he did at least take a benevolent interest in it from afar.¹³⁴

Here, then, is one way in which a line of communication might be imagined linking the *Iliad* poet to Nineveh through a single intermediary. An alternative approach to the problem is to think in terms of an Assyrian poet 'defecting' to the West, becoming Hellenized in the course of a few years, and turning into a Greek poet. We might picture him as a *nāru* with a scribal education, a disaffected man, planted against his will in one of the western border settlements, perhaps as an overseer, slipping down to the harbour one day and begging a passage on a ship sailing for Cyprus.

Let me reiterate that none of these speculative hypotheses is intended to account for more than one strand in a vast web. I am not looking for a single key that will resolve the whole problem. I have only constructed these rather detailed scenarios in connection with the *Iliad* because here we seem able to locate one source of oriental influence within narrow spatial and chronological limits. But there is far more in the *Iliad* itself than can be ascribed to this one source. When we contemplate the whole panorama, from Hesiod to Aeschylus, it is obvious that we can no more count and describe the sources of all the eastern motifs and procedures than plot the flow of waters beneath the surface of a marsh.

Among all the possible vehicles of transmission considered in this discussion, however, there is one that does seem to call for insistent emphasis: the immigrant, bilingual poet. The adoption of Semitic idioms in Greek poetic language is hard to explain by any other mechanism (cf. p. 588), and the importation of a whole range of poetic techniques from eastern poetry into Greek is most easily understood in this way. One disgruntled Assyrian is not enough. We have the archaeological evidence for sporadic immigration of craftsmen from the Levant from the ninth century on. There must have been poets among them or beside them, here and there, from time to time.¹³⁵ With their novel material and their beguiling narrative techniques—divine councils, message dreams, vivid similes, and all the rest—even a small number of such men might have exercised a disproportionate influence on the style of Greek poetry.

The testy critic may complain that there are too many 'might haves' and not enough indisputable 'must haves'. But mathematically rigorous demonstrations cannot be expected in these matters. It is a question of defining and weighing possibilities and probabilities. Each reader must judge, case by case, which of the various situations suggested as

¹³² Cf. my *Ancient Greek Music* (as ch. 1, n. 119), 19 n. 25.

¹³³ The style of these burials may in turn be inspired by earlier Cypriot epic, perhaps perpetuating the memory of Hittite royal funerals. See p. 398.

¹³⁴ The story was later elaborated in the *Cypria*, in a way less creditable to Cinyras (Alcid. *Od.* 20 f., Apollod. *epit.* 3. 9, sch. bT and Eust. on *Il.* 11. 20).

¹³⁵ Cf. my remarks in *JHS* 108, 1988, 171 f.

favourable for transmission are merely remotely conceivable hypotheses, and which are to be admitted as historically likely to have arisen. I hope to have shown that some, at least, fall into the latter category. In the final reckoning, however, the argument for pervasive West Asiatic influence on early Greek poetry does not stand or fall with explanations of how it came about. A corpse suffices to prove a death, even if the inquest is inconclusive.

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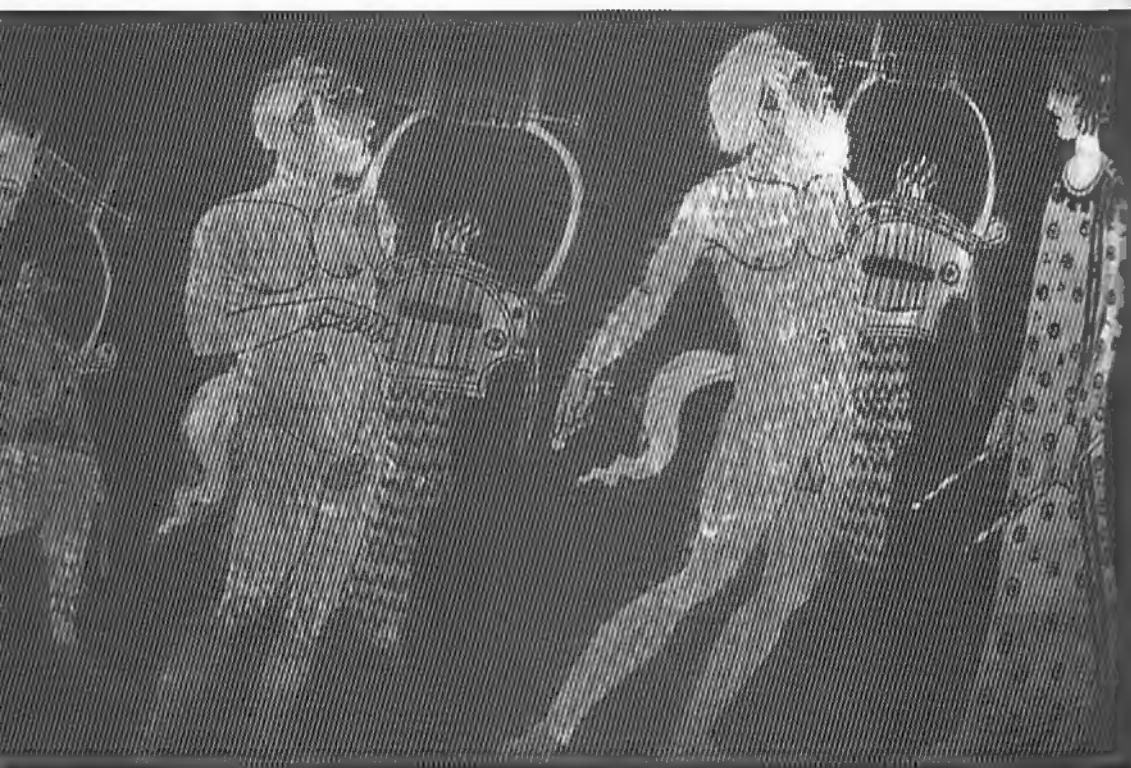
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Ever since Neolithic times Greek lands lay open to cultural imports from western Asia: agriculture, metal-working, writing, religious institutions, artistic fashions, musical instruments, and much more. Over the last sixty years scholars have become increasingly aware of links connecting early Greek poetry with the literatures of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Canaan, and Israel. Martin West's book far surpasses previous studies in comprehensiveness, demonstrating these links with massive and detailed documentation and showing that they are much more fundamental and pervasive than has hitherto been acknowledged. His survey embraces Hesiod, the Homeric epics, the lyric poets, and Aeschylus, and concludes with an illuminating discussion of possible avenues of transmission between the Orient and Greece. He believes that an age has dawned in which Hellenists will no more be able to ignore Near Eastern literature than Latinists can ignore Greek.

M. L. West is a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford.



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